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CONGREGATIONAL INDEPENDENCY

AND

WESLEYAN CONNEXIONALISM

CONTRASTED.

BY THE

REV. JAMES H. RIGG,

AUTHOR OF "THE PRINCIPLES OF WESLEYAN METHODISM."

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PREFACE.

THE *occasion* and *object* of the following discussion are sufficiently explained in the first chapter. A few words, however, may here be said as to the *manner*. The writer will perhaps be accused by some of having infused too much acrimony into his polemics. In reply to this, he has only to say that no one imputation upon the character or motives of any individual will be found in this tract; and only in two places, and in reference to one portion of the public press, has he allowed himself to reflect with any degree of severity upon the actual conduct of any *class* of persons. It is indeed to be regretted, in this case, that the conduct of the parties to whom he refers has been such, and so nearly connected with the necessity which has arisen for the present publication, as to render it impossible to avoid alluding to and characterizing their spirit and proceedings.

Of the system, however, the pretensions of which it is one object of this tract to lower, he has felt bound to speak in such terms as strict truth and the logical necessities of his argument seemed to require. If he has used plain and strong words, it has not been in the way of declamation, but as a result of demonstration. If his argument is faulty, then his conclusions are false, and his language is unjust. But, if the argument is sound, the words which he has used in reference to the *tendencies* and genius of Congregational Independency, are the only ones which directly and fairly express the truth.

The controversy is not at all with persons, but with a system. And the misrepresentations in reference to Wesleyan Connexionalism which have obtained so much currency, and which the Independent press has laboured

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so heartily and so perseveringly to accredit and propagate, have compelled such a thorough and discriminative examination and defence of the system gratuitously assailed, in reference especially to the particulars in which it has been unfavourably contrasted with its antagonist system, —Congregational Independency,—as could not but involve, in return, a direct and articulate attack upon the latter system in reference to those contrasted particulars.

It may be right to say, further, that the leisure of an enforced temporary retirement from the ordinary labours of the ministry seemed to lay upon the writer the duty of undertaking this argument, which the present circumstances of Wesleyan Methodism appeared to demand, and for which former engagements and inquiries had in some degree prepared him. The chapters here, in substance, reprinted, appeared, accordingly, as a series of articles, during the months of the last winter, in the columns of the "Watchman" newspaper. The urgent and unanimous requests of readers of every class— including several of the most distinguished among our Wesleyan laymen and ministers—have rendered it matter, not of option, but of duty, to publish these papers in their present form.

Sensible the author is of defects which time and care might have enabled him, at least in part, to remove; but delay, at present, would be more injurious than any but vital deficiencies. He therefore offers the present small treatise as a contribution to the constitutional science of that system which, the more he studies it, the more profoundly, gratefully, and religiously he admires and loves.

JAMES H. RIGG.

London, May 6th, 1851.

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CONGREGATIONAL INDEPENDENCY,

&c.

CHAPTER I.

APOSTOLIC CHRISTIANITY CONNEXIONAL IN PRINCIPLE.—A SCRIPTURAL "CHURCH."

A SYSTEM which claims for itself *Divine right*, is, of necessity, an exclusive and polemic system. Making such pretensions, it, of course, challenges and proscribes every other as unauthorised and anti-scriptural. It must, therefore, expect its claims to be scrutinized and its pretensions opposed by the adherents of all other systems.

Now, such a system is that of Independency, as accepted and advocated by the more rigid of its adherents. High Episcopalians themselves are not more resolute than stiff Independents, in upholding the claims of their own polity as alone divinely authenticated.

Wesleyans, on the other hand, have ever defended their system in a more modest tone and on less exclusive grounds. They conceive that only general principles, as to the matter of church-government, were fixed authoritatively by Scripture. The particular adaptations of these principles, and the details of church-arrangement, have, as they believe, been left to be moulded according to the varying idiosyncrasies of human character and circumstances of the world.

Yet, when it becomes necessary to enter the lists of controversy on behalf of their ecclesiastical polity, Wesleyans find little difficulty in evincing that their own system is in at least as close conformity with even the leading *details* of the primitive church-arrangements as any other that may boast, however confidently, of its

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superior or exclusive purity and scriptural authority. Still, it is not upon this fact that Wesleyans ground their attachment to their peculiar institutions, so much as on the eminent adaptation of these to do the work of the primitive institutions in the present condition of the world, and to diffuse, unadulterated and unimpaired, the energy and influence of the apostolic gospel. And the peculiar excellence of the Wesleyan economy, in their view, is, that it embodies more perfectly, and expresses more directly and fully, than any other, the genius, the spirit and tendencies, of primitive Christianity.

Yet Wesleyans do not deny that there may be circumstances and characters in relation to which another church-system than their own may be found both more congenial and more edifying. With that large tolerance, that genuine liberality, which is not always found associated with a loudly-proclaimed liberalism, but which has ever been the characteristic of Wesleyanism, they, on this point, are perfectly willing to "think and let think."

Circumstances have at length compelled us to rise in earnest in our own defence. Foes within our church have been, in a spirit of the most gratuitous and unchristian hostility, backed and applauded in their fiercest, ay, and in their *foulest*, assaults, by foes without, who had been wearing the semblance and using the language of *friends*, and whom, forgiving and forgetting previous wrongs, we had believed to be sincere in their words of friendship. Both these parties have united, with common consent, though with a dialectic variety of speech, to attack our institutions and economy, as well as our good name.

We have long borne almost in silence the assaults of the Independent press upon our Wesleyan polity. This we have done, not because we were unable to defend ourselves, nor because we had no adequate retort to throw back on our assailants; but because we have loved peace rather than war.

There are limits, however, beyond which patience becomes pusillanimity, and silence unfaithfulness. A

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crisis may arrive when we must either speak, or our influence be seriously diminished, and our cause be counted lost. If we consent at last to contend with those with whom we would fain have dwelt in peace as brethren,—and if, in accepting the challenge so long and defiantly sounded, we carry our attacks in turn into the territory of those who will be our enemies,—it is only in order that we may gain a position from which to command a lasting peace.

Independents have been accustomed to speak and write as though their system of church-government were immaculate, and ours most indefensibly faulty,—as if all scriptural precedent and principle were with them, and ours a mere human system of expediency and craft.

Not that the most intelligent and reflective of them could really believe this. Let the pages either of Miall, on the one hand, or of Dr. Davidson, on the other, be consulted, and it will be seen how very little, on the showing of such authorities as these among Independents themselves, the system of modern Independency possesses in common with the principles and provisions which—the same in general outline—characterized the church-arrangements of primitive and apostolical Christianity. But this is, among Independents, esoteric doctrine. Here and there, and now and then, a bold and honest spirit may venture to promulgate it; but it is not for the promiscuous multitude. The exoteric doctrine, which the people are taught or allowed to believe, is what we have said. And even Dr. Campbell, who must know better, one would think, writing, a few months ago, in his "Banner," an account of the last meeting of the Congregational Union, in which he is obviously haunted throughout by a conviction and feeling of the vital deficiencies of Congregationalism, ventures, notwithstanding, to cast a reflection upon the systems of Methodism, of united Presbyterianism, and of the Scotch Free Church, as being, in comparison with Independency, "artificial and less scriptural systems." It is high time that the weakness and folly of this style of assumption should be

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exposed. And, in reluctantly undertaking this office, we are encouraged by the consideration that we are not defending Wesleyan Methodism merely, but the great majority of Protestant organizations, against the bigotry and exclusiveness of one portion of a single sect.

Whilst we make no pretensions, on behalf of Methodism, to absolute identity, or even a very close agreement, in the *details* of its ecclesiastical polity, with the machinery and arrangements of the apostolic churches,—indeed, we believe no perfect or certainly accurate description of the order and discipline of those churches ever has been or can be given,—yet we feel assured that we hazard nothing in maintaining that our polity much more truly represents the spirit and principles of primitive Christian organization than that in which the Independents glory.

To our minds, nothing appears plainer than that Connexionalism, and not Independency, was the condition of the apostolic churches; not, indeed, a highly-organized and close-knit Connexionalism, such as belongs to modern Methodism,—this could not have been, eighteen hundred years ago, in the infancy of the widely-scattered primitive churches, and under the peculiar circumstances in which they were placed,—but still *Connexionalism in principle*, —in germ and general outline.

Indeed, the union in doctrine, in object, in love, and in commission, of the apostles, necessarily laid the foundation of a connexion and intercommunity between the churches founded and regulated by them. The apostolic council, too, at Jerusalem, formed, as to matters of general interest and importance, a common standard of reference and fountain of authority to all the churches. Even Paul, independent as was his commission, and separate as was, in general, his sphere of action, yet felt it right, by a reference to the central apostolic authority at Jerusalem, to bring himself, and the churches founded by him, into recognised community and co-ordination with the other churches of Christ. On his first visit to Jerusalem, after his conversion, he communicated with Peter and

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James, and abode with the former fifteen days. Fourteen years after, he went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus, and "communicated unto them that gospel which he preached among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means he should run, or had run, in vain." Very significant is the narrative in Acts xv. and xvi. Paul was an apostle—Barnabas scarcely less; and these, in conjunction with the church at Antioch, might have been sufficient, one would think, to determine any point of doctrine, discipline, or practice, about which there was any controversy or doubt. Assuredly, if the church at Antioch had possessed the spirit or embraced the principles of modern Independency, they would never have thought of referring the questions which troubled them to the decision of a distant central authority at Jerusalem, especially when they had with them two apostolic men. Yet this is what they actually did. "They determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other with them, should go up to Jerusalem, unto the apostles and elders, about this question." And the apostles and elders at Jerusalem decided it,—"laying no greater burden" on the church at Antioch "than these necessary things," &c. After which, Paul and Silas, going forth from Antioch to visit the churches of Asia, which Paul had founded among the Gentiles, "delivered them the decrees for to keep which were ordained of the apostles and elders." So, when Paul, at a much later period of his history, returning to Jerusalem with alms for his countrymen, gave an account of his labours and successes to the assembly of apostles and elders, we find them not only giving Paul directions as to his behaviour, which he immediately followed, but speaking in language which implies, on their part, the possession of something approaching to œcumenical authority over the churches,—"As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing," &c. (Acts xxi.) It is plain that in all this we have a system outlined and initiated the very reverse of Congregational Independency. Here is a union and

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council of Ministers,*—"apostles and elders,"—centralized in one spot, assuming and exercising authority to make "decrees" binding upon all the churches of Christ; those churches being, with a single exception, not even represented in, or before, the council from which the decrees go forth. Even apostles joined in referring and deferring to this general and central authority.

We shall, perhaps, be reminded that apostles presided over the church at Jerusalem. But there was an apostle, also, among the Gentile churches. Paul was a chief apostle. Besides, the elders are distinctly associated with the apostles as authenticating these decrees. And, further, the question is not, what might have been if inspired apostles had not been at the head of the primitive churches, but what was. Was, or was not, the system of polity then dawning into distinctness identical in spirit and principle with Congregational Independency? The evidence already given might warrant a negative answer.

But, there are other things connected with the relations of the primitive churches to each other, and to their common founders, sufficiently indicative of the mutual connexion and intercommunity of many of them. Some of these are minor and incidental in themselves; yet their evidence is, on that account, all the more valuable. To bring forward all the evidence of this kind contained in the apostolic writings would occupy a very considerable space. We can only refer to a small portion. Let candid inquirers carefully read only 1 Cor. xvi., and 2 Cor. i., viii., ix., and they will both see and feel how entirely opposed was the condition of the earliest churches of Christ to the spirit and principles of modern Congregational Indepen-

* The whole connexion proves that the apostles and elders constituted the only essential authority in this matter. The "multitude," it is evident, were present only to hear, inquire, (if needful,) and be instructed,—not to vote or judge. That they were joined as co-ordinate authorities in this case, is, if we look at all the circumstances, and consider well the phraseology used in various places by St. Luke, really incredible.

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dency. The various churches, it will be seen, are under a common direction, and are referred to each other for regulative precedents, and examples for imitation. "Concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, so do ye." (1 Cor. xvi. 1.) "I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many," &c.; (2 Cor. ix. 2, &c.;) with which also compare 2 Cor. viii. 1, 4. The ministers accredited by one church were thereby authenticated in all, and some of them (as Timothy and Titus) possessed a common commission as special itinerants among the churches. "If Timotheus come, see that he be with you without fear; for he worketh the work of the Lord, even as I." (1 Cor. xvi. 10.) "We desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you this grace also. And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches.....Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow-helper concerning you; or our brethren be inquired of, they are the messengers of the churches and the glory of Christ. Wherefore show ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf." (2 Cor. viii. 6, 18, 23, 24.)—And how distinctly and persuasively is the principle of connexional union and mutual aid—the very principle of Wesleyan Methodism—enunciated in the following words!—"Not that other men be eased and ye burdened: but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality." (2 Cor. viii. 13, 14.) To these references we will only add one more. The apostle Paul himself was maintained by the common care of the churches, and his maintenance is implied by himself to have been a common obligation binding upon the churches. "Ye have well done that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now" (or for) "ye Philippians know, also, that, in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed

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from Macedonia, no church communicated with me, as concerning giving or receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift; but I desire fruit that may abound to your account." (Phil. iv. 14—17.)

How little is there in all this to remind us of the tone, temper, or aspect of modern Congregationalism! What we have adduced above, however, are rather symptomatic traces, intimating the spirit and tendency of apostolic Christianity, than distinct and conclusive evidence as to the character and purport of its organization. The union of the anointed apostles, who had received a common commission from their common Lord,—the deference shown by the great apostle of the Gentiles, and by the Gentile churches, to the central authority of the apostles and elders presiding over the mother-church at Jerusalem, —the common subjection of the Gentile churches to Paul, and to the Ministers deputed and authenticated by him,—the obligation upon each of the churches to cherish and honour any who came as the messengers of their fellow-churches, and to receive them as possessing authority and commission from Christ,—the common care of all the churches for each, and their obligation to afford mutual help in proportion to emergent necessities,—the dependence of the great apostle himself, whilst prosecuting his missionary labours, upon the common love and duty of the churches to which he had ministered:—all this, though it strongly savours of the principle, does not absolutely prove the fact, of connexional organization, as characterizing the early churches. It would, indeed, be very difficult to reconcile it with the genius and tendency of modern Congregationalism. But we shall be expected to bring more distinct evidence than this, in order to make good the affirmations with which we commenced this argument.

Let us now, then, turn our attention to the actual church-organization of the apostolic times. On this point we have no very complete or minute information; but we have quite enough, notwithstanding, to prove that

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the arrangements of a Wesleyan circuit very much more nearly, both in principle and detail, resemble the primitive model, than those of Independent churches.

There would seem to be no point connected with primitive church-organization more evidently certain, than that the apostolic churches usually included not only a plurality of pastors, but of congregations. This fact lies upon the surface, as we think, of nearly every Epistle, and is plainly implied in several passages in the Acts. But it is, and indeed must be, denied by resolute and thorough Congregationalists. And as this point is one of the hinges upon which our controversy turns, we must bestow upon it a sufficient examination.

Strict Independents maintain that, in the apostolic writings, by a particular church we are always to understand so many believers as were accustomed to meet together in one place for mutual edification, and to receive the sacraments in common. And they infer, from this supposed fact, that it is unlawful to unite several distinct companies of communicants under the government of one pastorate.

Our common-sense readers will no doubt think it very strange and unreasonable that the second of these positions should be maintained, if even the first were true. It plainly rests upon the assumption that scripture precedent is, as to matters of church-arrangement, no less binding than scripture precept. But why, then, do not our Independent brethren appoint deaconesses, and hold feasts of charity, as the primitive church undeniably did? This question has been often asked; but never has been, and never can be, satisfactorily answered. Let it be shown that a plainly-taught scripture *principle* is involved in any *precedent*, and to the *principle* we will adhere. The precedent, as such, is mere *letter*. We must attain to the *spirit*.

But, now, as to the *matter of fact*. Independents, in maintaining their opinion, are compelled also to maintain that there was no church-community, in primitive times, so numerous as to be unable to assemble in such a build-

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ing as might be at the command of the Christians, before specific sacred edifices were built. They are compelled to maintain this, because it is perfectly evident that the apostles considered all the Christians of each city as constituting one church. The assumption, no doubt, is startling; but to dispute it is not, this moment, our purpose. We wish to point out, what all Independents seem to have lost sight of, that they must be prepared, also, to maintain that, under the administration of the apostles, if, in any city, say at Jerusalem or Ephesus, the Christian community *had* become too large for accommodation in one place; in such a case, the brethren would have severed themselves clean away, into two independent churches—two separate "interests"—mutually exclusive and apart. He must have ill-conceived the spirit of primitive Christianity who can believe this. Would this have accorded with the temper of that religion which, in the church at Jerusalem, made "all things," in effect, "common," so that "no man counted aught that he had his own?" which led the multitude of the disciples to "break their bread from house to house," and to continue steadfastly, not only in the "apostles' doctrine," but in mutual "fellowship?" This would have been to institute rivalry in the place of unity, and to engender selfishness instead of love!

But, again, as to the matter of fact? *Could* each of the primitive churches be contained in one building?

The church at Jerusalem was extremely numerous. It cannot be supposed to have contained fewer than 10,000 members. (Acts ii. 41, 47; iv. 4; v. 14; vi. 7.) The church at Ephesus, also, can scarcely have been less numerous. (Acts xix. 17—20.) Now, at that time, in the very earliest infancy of Christianity, the believers could have possessed no large public buildings for divine worship: how then can it be supposed that their private religious meetings, at which all the members of the church were expected to be present, were held in one place? A church meeting of 10,000 members! and in apostolic times, too!

Rigid Independents are bound to maintain so extraordi-

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nary a supposition, or to give up their "right divine." But all others are agreed in holding it to be incredible; and even more moderate Independents, Dr. Davidson, for instance, have felt constrained to give it up. The old school, however, as represented by Dr. Wardlaw, still cling to it: though even these appear to be staggered by the difficulty. We need hardly say, that the authority of all standard church-historians, down to the learned and painstaking Gieseler, and the sagacious and impartial Neander,* is against the Independents on this point.

But Dr. Wardlaw maintains that, however hard of belief it may appear, it is yet affirmed in scripture that the church at Jerusalem *did* meet in one place. He refers to Acts ii. 44, where it is said that "all that believed were together;" but Dr. Wardlaw should know that the form of speech here rendered "together," means literally "at one," and may apply as properly in those who are joined together in one spirit as to a company gathered together in one place. Does the Doctor believe all the three thousand believers were accustomed to bring their united property, also, into this one place, where they "were together, and had all things common?" and again, that "all together," they not only frequented the temple, but "broke bread from house to house?" A consistent interpretation will compel him to maintain all this. We are next pointed to Acts vi. 2, and xv. 12, 22, where "the multitude of the disciples," and "the whole church," are, in our authorised version, spoken of as having been assembled together. But every tyro in Greek knows that the word here rendered "multitude," may be used in reference to any number of persons collected together, from a few scores upwards, and that the word translated "church" means, to use Dr. Wardlaw's own language, "generically, *an assembly*," and is, or may be, "employed indiscriminately," in this sense; and, further, that, still to quote Dr. Wardlaw, "in this its generic sense, it is

* See especially "NEANDER's Church History," vol. i. (Clarke's Edition,) pp. 250—253.

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applied, in the New-Testament history, (Acts xix. 41,) to the tumultuous concourse of people at Ephesus, at the time of the Demetrian riot." So the word used in the 39th verse of that chapter, to denote "the lawful *assembly*," is still the same word, *ecclesia*, which, in Acts xv. 22, is rendered "church." Let it, in this latter passage, be translated *meeting* or *assembly*, as it certainly ought to be, since none but Independents can believe that all, or even the greater part, of the 10,000 or 15,000 members of the church were present, and then Dr. Wardlaw's objections are annihilated.

We conclude, then, that the churches of Jerusalem and Ephesus, not being able all to meet in one place, embraced several, probably many, separate congregations. These, therefore, constituting all together—as is, on all hands, admitted—but one church, under a common government, must have been *connexionally* united.

But this does not close our case. We read, in various parts of the apostolic writings, of "churches in houses." (See Rom. xvi. 3, 5, 23; 1 Cor. xvi. 19; Col. iv. 15; Philem. 2.) Aquila and Priscilla, whether at Ephesus or Corinth, or (probably) at Rome, had a church in their house. Gaius, too, seems to have had a church in his house at Corinth. And so had Philemon at Colosse, as well as Nymphas at Laodicea. But were all these distinct and separate churches, communicating apart, and governed by their peculiar ministers? We believe, in reference to those at Corinth, Colosse, and Rome, that this is not imagined by any. But if not, then it is clear that the word "church" is, in scripture itself, applied to a branch-meeting, tributary to, and connected with, the general church of the place.

On this point, as we have already intimated, the judgment of Dr. Davidson is decidedly with us.* But perhaps with many Congregationalists the authority of the editor of the "Nonconformist," who professes to represent

* See "The Congregational Lecture for 1848," pp. 111, 120—124.

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the "Dissidence of Dissent, and the Protestantism of the Protestant Religion," may, in this matter, weigh more than that of Dr. Davidson. In a work recently published, this gentleman describes "all the believers in one city or town," in primitive times,

As associated together in spiritual fellowship, meeting statedly for prayer, praise, and the breaking of bread, not necessarily in one place, but often in several.*

Again, Mr. Miall elsewhere writes still more plainly:—

In apostolic times, there seems reason to conclude, all the Christian disciples of one city or town were united together in spiritual fellowship, and constituted the one church in that town. No evidence exists that the Christian community in any one city was divided into as many separate organizations, as there were separate places of worship.....As its members multiplied to such an extent as to render the gathering together of all of them in one place impracticable, they would, without dividing the body, and appointing a separate official machinery, assemble in more than one, and add to their elders and teachers as convenience might prescribe.†

The same writer shall be allowed to point the contrast to all this, as existing in connexion with modern Independency. His words may possibly command attention where prejudice would prevent ours from being heard:—

Meanwhile, it is but too apparent, that the needless multiplication of spiritual organizations in one locality, and the appointment of a single minister over each, but ill succeeds in eliciting either the life or the power of religious association.....From that spot (the pulpit) the devotions of the people are to be led by the same man that preaches the word, every time the church assembles, year after year. The most seraphic piety, combined with the most splendid talents, can hardly, on this plan, prevent both devotion and instruction from becoming invested with an air of formality, deeply injurious to freshness of religious feeling.....What is it we see [in Independent churches]? Multiplication, instead of extension; conglomeration, in the place of diffusion; several "interests," where there should be one church; a stronger motive to gather up than to scatter abroad, to concentrate than to diffuse, to entice in than to send forth. Who has not witnessed, with a sigh of anguish, separate spiritual organizations, embodying precisely the same faith and

* MIALL'S "British Churches in relation to the British People," 8vo. ed. p. 246.

† Ibid, pp. 258, 259, 268.

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practice, in the same town, sometimes in the same village, contending with each other, as if victory in such contention were gain to the church, scrambling after proselytes instead of seeking converts, and giving to their respective *interests* the zeal, devotion, and labour which ought to have been enlisted in the service of heavenly truths? Who has not observed, and inwardly groaned while he observed, churches discountenancing all effort which might redistribute their own members; and, although swelling into proportions too ample for convenient assembling in one place, frowning upon every proposition which might appear to threaten the birth and growth of a rival body? There are important places in this empire in which single Christian societies, commonly supposed to be in a pre-eminently flourishing state, positively stifle, by their influence, all further enterprise in the same locality; and instead of enlarging their bodies, and making their moral force tell upon greater breadths of society, simply drain all neighbouring religious life into their own reservoir, in process of years to stagnate and become corrupt. These are terrible facts; but, I ask with fearlessness, are they not facts?*

What a censure is this, from the hand of a friend, upon the unscriptural system of modern Independency! How high a tribute, from one of another denomination, to the principles of Wesleyan Methodism!†

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* MIALL'S "British Churches in relation to the British People," 8vo. ed. pp. 259, 260, 268, 270.

† We may possibly be told by some Independents, that Mr. Miall is *not* an authority in these matters. "Dr. Morison," it will be said, "has rebuked and refuted him, and so has Dr. Vaughan." We beg to say, that neither Dr. Morison nor Dr. Vaughan has refuted, or even challenged, the above sentiments; and it is plain that the *truth* of much in Mr. Miall's work is not less displeasing to his Congregationalist critics than his errors on some points. We are no advocates of Mr. Miall's ultra-democracy, nor can we approve of his extravagant notions about religious debating societies; but he is both an able and an honest man; and, as himself an Independent, and formerly an Independent minister, he is a very competent witness as to the general character and tendencies of Independency. We repeat that, on several points, we differ *toto cœlo* from Mr. Miall. Nor has he ever been a friend of Methodism. We believe, however, that but for his eulogies on Methodism, sometimes expressed, and sometimes implied, and which, as coming from a keen observer, and a witness prejudiced against us and our system, are particularly valuable, Mr. Miall's book would have been considerably less unpalatable to his Congregationalist reviewers. And we may well ask why, in an article headed by a reference to Dr. Beecham's "Essay on the Constitution of Methodism," as well as to Mr. Miall's volume, Dr. Vaughan should have omitted all reference to those portions of Mr. Miall's work, in which he so compares Methodism with

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CHAPTER II.

MINISTERIAL AUTHORITY AND CHURCH-DISCIPLINE.

We have shown that something like a connexional union subsisted between both the apostles and, as far as practicable, the churches of their founding; that the Gentile churches, especially, deferred to a common central authority; followed the same rules and precedents; recognised and received, as possessing a title to ministerial status and honour, the ministers accredited by each other; and acknowledged a common obligation to help each other's necessities, and "bear each other's burdens;" —and, beyond all this, exemplified, in their actual organization, a church-arrangement essentially connexional, and opposed to the Congregational Independency of modern times.

We proceed to show that, in several other particulars, the churches, which have been accustomed to boast of their conformity to the "primitive model," are, in fact, quite at variance with it.

The appointment of pastors among Congregationalists is not regulated in conformity with New-Testament principles. The people appoint by direct election, and hence the minister is immediately and absolutely dependent upon them for his official authority. Such was not the plan in primitive times. The apostles, or their substitutes, "ordained elders in every city." The direction to Timothy was, "The things which thou hast heard of me

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Independency, as to show that the latter is less accordant not only with the principles of primitive church organization, but with the *demands of the present age*, than the former. This omission is the more unfair and disingenuous, as the Doctor has taken the opportunity, in passing, to bestow a summary *ex cathedrâ* censure on Methodism,—with the principles and working of which he seems to be much less acquainted than becomes so general a scholar and so responsible a reviewer,—as needing fundamental alteration to adapt it to "the times."

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among many witnesses, the same commit THOU to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also;" to Titus, that he should "set in order the things which were wanting, and ordain elders in every city." The New-Testament principle, therefore, is, that the ministry shall appoint their associates or successors, and be made directly responsible for their purity, fidelity, and ability. And this is the principle of Wesleyan Methodism. Whereas, the Independent principle is, that every congregation, however recently gathered, raw, uninformed, or even corrupt it may happen to be, shall be left to choose its own teacher and pastor; a principle which is as opposed to common sense as to scripture teaching. Just apply it to the election of teachers or governors in any University or training-institution, and to what absurdities will it conduct us! The direct and entire dependence of the pastors upon the flock, of teachers and governors upon those to be taught and governed, is certainly a strange inversion, and inconsistent with that fidelity to the truth of scripture, that plain and honest dealing with all transgressors of Christ's laws, and that strict adherence to Christian discipline, which the Head of the church requires of all His ministers. How can ministers so situated "watch for souls, as those that must give account" to Christ? And how, except as the language of irony, could they use, in addressing their charge, the apostle's exhortation, "Obey them that rule over you, and submit yourselves?" The Independent theory goes upon the assumption, that every church-member is competently intelligent, and humbly pious, "a perfect man in Christ Jesus," who has his "senses fully exercised to distinguish good from evil," right from wrong. Little need, comparatively, could such a community have of a teacher or pastor at all. A settled minister, a permanent (nominal) head and ruler is, in fact, an incongruity and superfluity, on the pure Independent hypothesis.

Of course, such being the origin of the minister's authority in an Independent community, it is an easy and obvious corollary from this first principle, that every

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church-act, to be valid, must express and embody the decision of the majority of church-members. The minister is not the servant and humble representative of Christ, bound to teach His truth and enforce His laws, whether the people "will hear or whether they will forbear;" but he is simply *the organ and the mouth-piece of the people.* How can a minister so circumstanced respond to the prophet's strain of exhortation in Ezekiel xxxiii.? How can he, in this degraded and degrading position, "conscientiously, and without fear or favour, discharge his duty to Christ, in 'warning the unruly,' 'rebuking those who are unsound in the faith,' 'rejecting' the factious or immoral? A corrupt Independent church is almost certain to grow more deeply and deadly corrupt; and in one that is tainted with corruption, the leaven of evil is very likely to spread. The republican constitution of those churches calls forth and fosters a turbulent Antinomian spirit; and the factious flatterer of popular vanity, or abettor of popular licence, will almost always, in the end, overcome the passive resistance and quiet influence of the more peaceable, pious, and sober-minded. Just as any form of church-government, departing from what we believe to be the *juste milieu* of Wesleyan church-government, approaches to the Independent or republican model, it becomes liable, as experience has abundantly demonstrated, to the operation of similar evils."*

In countless ways must this direct and absolute dependence of the pastor upon his flock for authority and power to act, operate to the detriment of purity and scriptural discipline.

Nor is it merely in relation to the purity and discipline of the flock, that Independency, when pure and unmodified, strongly tends to evil. It affords a very insufficient guarantee for the purity, whether doctrinal or moral, of the ministry. We have seen that, according to the New-Testament principle and precedent, the purity and fidelity

* "Principles of Methodism," 1st edit. pp. 69, 70.

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of the ministry are intrusted to the vigilance and care of the ministers themselves. The charge of Timothy is, "The same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach," &c., and, "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses;" and again, "Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither" (by connivance at the sins of those in office, whom it was his duty to rebuke) "be partaker of other men's sins." These passages imply that Timothy was made responsible for the purity, fidelity, and competency of the elders or bishops within his charge. The whole spirit of the two Epistles to Timothy, and of the one to Titus, implies this in reference to both those sub-apostolic ministers. The *principle* is that of ministerial oversight; the particular means and method here indicated were such as were suitable to the condition of newly-organized and comparatively ignorant and inexperienced churches, placed in circumstances of great temptation. The same plan of something like episcopal oversight of ministers themselves, is found to be a *desideratum*, even at the present day, in the different provinces of the mission-field; and a similar plan was adopted by John Knox, in the early days of the Reformation in Scotland; his "superintendent" performed several important parts of the episcopal function. But among the Independents there exists no provision whatever for any thing like mutual ministerial oversight. The minister and the flock are all in all to each other. Corruption or indolence or lifelessness in either is likely immediately to react injuriously upon the other. There is no healthy circulation flowing from church to church; no common permeating life; no wide-spread sympathies; no intertwining tendrils of mutual amity and intercourse, or far-reaching arms of common enterprise. Each is independent,—how likely to become selfish! Each settled in its own bed,—how likely to become stagnant! Minister and people alike thus secluded, and exposed to these temptations to listless, selfish indolence, how probable is it that they will fall asleep in each other's arms, till the Christian

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life is utterly forgotten and extinct! * But where there exists a union both of churches and of ministers, the latter being united for common oversight of each other, as well as in common care of the churches, this is much less likely to be the case. A large fire is not so easily extinguished as its scattered embers. A large and highly-organized body retains warmth longer than one smaller and less complex, and defies a thousand local lesions which would each have destroyed a minute and simple organism. Ministers, too, in a truly enlightened and Christian community, being unsustained by the secular arm, and directly dependent on voluntary support, are likely to be, on the whole, more wise, spiritual, vigilant against evil, and jealous of ministerial purity, as well as more at leisure and more competent to guard against evil and corruption, whether in life or doctrine, than the people.

How deeply the serious practical evils in Congregational Independency are felt by the most enlightened among Independent ministers themselves, shall be shown by two quotations. The excellent Mr. James, of Birmingham, expresses himself in reference to the powerless condition of the ministers in many Independent churches, in the following terms. As Wesleyans, we could not have ventured to speak so strongly.

It is my decided conviction, that, in many of our churches, the pastor is depressed far below his just level. He is considered merely in the light of a speaking brother. He has no official distinction or authority. He may flatter like a sycophant, he may beg like a servant, he may woo like a lover; but he is not permitted to enjoin like a ruler. His opinion is received with no deference, his person treated with no respect, and, in the presence of some of his lay-tyrants, if he has any thing to say, it must be something similar to the ancient soothsayers; he is only permitted to peep and mutter from the dust.†

* Instances very many in illustration of the foregoing observations might be brought from the Congregational and *isolated* Presbyterian churches, both of the United Kingdom and America. How many of these have become first unfruitful and then corrupt, settling upon their lees either into Antinomianism or Socinianism! Mutual ministerial oversight and responsibility might have done much to prevent this.

† James on Christian Fellowship.

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The following remarkable passages are taken from the masterly address of Mr. Binney, at the opening of the sessions of the late meeting of the Congregational Union, where that gentleman presided,—an address equally creditable to his catholicity of feeling and largeness of intellect.

I am not one of those (he says) who are so happy as to think that their own particular communion has got hold of the whole truth on all points, and nothing else; and that other communions must be necessarily wrong wherever they are so unfortunate as to differ from them. I am disposed to think that there is something right in all Christian communities, and in all ecclesiastical forms; that each has some portion of truth, some right idea, which the others have not; and that all have got some errors they would be the better without.

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If Independency proceeds to the entire insulation of every distinct and separate interest from all others; if each society, and every individual, insists upon the exercise of their own liberties, unaffected by all connexional relationships; if, at the same time, the voluntary principle is carried to the extent of all churches and congregations, of all sizes, and in every place, each for itself finding within itself the means of its own support; men may say what they please about Divine ideas, or primitive models, or any thing else; but the fact is, that while, on such a system, you might have perfect liberty, congregational independence, separation from the state, freedom from the "supremacy," and so on, you could not have compactness or power as a body, strength from union, defence from scandal, nor ability to provide for the spiritual wants of small and poor patches of population. Independency may, doubtless, be carried so far as that Independents shall not be, properly speaking, a body; the churches shall not be members of a body, or, if members, only like so many scattered and separate legs and arms.

No one can mistake the import of this. Mr. Binney, in fact, gives up the Divine right of Independency, and admits that, pure and unmodified, it is a cold, selfish, and impotent system. To make it tolerable in the present age of enlarged sympathy, extending effort, and ever-increasing and intensifying activity, it must depart from the purity or strictness of its principles, as Independency, and become, to some considerable extent, connexionalized. More especially, Mr. Binney, in an after-part of his address, intimates the weakness of Congregationalism as to the point of ministerial purity and discipline, to which we have just been referring. This, as all readers of the

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public news are aware, is one of the sore places, as well as weak points, in modern Independency. "We see," says Mr. Binney, "in our own case, *the scandal produced by some cases of flagrant immorality*, WHERE WE HAVE NOT THE POWER TO IMPOSE SILENCE." Ministers are corrupt; but the ministry at large, having lost their scriptural right of mutual oversight, have no power to purge out the corruption; while "the people love to have it so."

Before we close this chapter, we must guard against being misunderstood on one point. We are no advocates for unlimited arbitrary power on the part of the ministry. Let there be whatever checks are needful to secure the people from the abuse of power on the part of ministers. Such checks are abundantly supplied in Methodism. Besides which, a free public opinion, and the dependence of the ministry, as a whole, upon the body of the people for their support, must ever preserve our societies from the fear of oppressive laws, of an unjust or tyrannical system of administration, or of any abetting of tyranny or injustice on the part of the Conference. "Partial disapprobation and local prejudices within their borders, and the fretting of sectarian jealousies without, can well be borne by the rulers of a truly Christian and well-regulated church community, so long as their conduct is founded upon reason and right, because this will ever secure, from the members at large, general approval and support. But no voluntary community, in a free and enlightened age and country, can long prosper, or even subsist, after its laws have been mixed with injustice, or its administration has become partial or oppressive."*

Let whatever checks are needful to secure the just exercise of ministerial prerogative be imposed. What we maintain is only that a "system which, not content with establishing guards against the abuse of ministerial power, annihilates that power altogether, and despoils the pastoral office of those prerogatives of government and discipline so clearly assigned to it in the New Testament, is,

* "Principles of Methodism," 1st edit. p. 72.

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to this extent, certainly anti-scriptural."* And that it does this, is our charge against Congregational Independency.

By such a system the true Christian rights of the people, no less than of the ministry, are, in fact, sacrificed. These are purity of doctrine and fidelity of discipline. How often, in an Independent church, are these, the just rights of the many, withheld through the undue power of a few! The minister and a few favoured or powerful ones are in league. "To the junction of a lay oligarchy and a ministerial oligarchy," says Mr. Welch,—and these are wise and weighty words,—"may be attributed every persecution and tyranny that has yet afflicted the church of Christ." In how many Independent churches may the truth of this be seen exemplified on a small scale! The "power of the purse" and "the power of the keys" have coalesced; the ministerial function becomes the slave, that the minister may hold the favour and support, of the money-power. A resident lay-patron is a more common, and more continually operative, cause of evil in Independent churches than in the Episcopal establishment. "Mr. So-and-So, or his lady, manages all in such and such a church." How often do we hear this said of Independent churches! What, then, becomes of the rights of the people? What redress can the flock obtain against the minister and his rich friends? What a blessing would mutual ministerial oversight and responsibility be in such a case!

It is plain, then, that, to secure independence and purity among ministers; to preserve truth, discipline, and piety among the people; to rescue the Christian and right-hearted, whether of ministers or people, from the un-Christian tyranny of a majority, or the influence of a powerful, but corrupt or selfish, minority; Independency is impotent; and reason, no less than scripture, requires mutual ministerial oversight and connexional union.

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* "Principles of Methodism," 1st edit. p. 73.

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CHAPTER III.

ADAPTATION TO EVANGELISTIC OR MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE.

THE temper and tendency of Congregational Independency are in striking contrast to the spirit of primitive Christianity. Independency is solitary, self-sufficient, selfish;* primitive Christianity was social, helpful, loving. The one tends to disintegration or stagnation, the other tended to diffusion and unity. Not less opposed is the actual church-system of Independency to the church organization of apostolic times. Independency isolates her congregations and her pastors; apostolic Christianity associated several congregations and several, sometimes many, pastors. Here is a fundamental and irreconcilable difference; and taking our stand on this we might well maintain the unscriptural character of the Independent model. The essential doctrine of Independency is the right of every church-member directly to concur in every disciplinary act or regulation connected with the church; and a secondary, but no less essential, principle is the right of every congregation completely, and without any foreign sanction or concurrence, to control its own affairs. Every individual member is to have an equal voice and vote in all decisions, and each Congregational church is to be complete in itself and alone. But the second of these principles is directly contradicted in the organization of the apostolic churches; whilst, in such churches, to act upon the first would have been plainly impossible. Here, then, with this firm ground beneath us, we might rest content, assured that all verbal criticism which, despite of such a fact as the connexional character of the apostolic churches, would attempt to gain from scripture a sanction to the principles of Independency, must be futile.

But our argument does not stay here. We have found

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* See the note on p. 79.

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evident proof, from the apostolic writings, that the pastors or elders of the churches were appointed, not by the people, though they may have been accepted or approved by them, but by the ministers of Christ, whether apostles, evangelists, or co-presbyters; and that they were amenable for error, in life or doctrine, to their co-presbyters, or to their superiors in ministerial authority, and not to the people, whom they were appointed to teach and govern. We have seen, too, that the opposite arrangements to these—such as are the rule in Independent churches,—are plainly and necessarily incompatible with that direct relation and responsibility of the minister to Christ, as his only Master and Lawgiver, which is so clearly taught in scripture; and with that faithful, fearless, and impartial discharge of his duties to his flock, in teaching, reproving, warning, and governing them, which is so strongly and repeatedly enjoined by the sacred writers. The system of Independency is alike unfriendly to the piety and fidelity of pastor and of flock; the action and re-action are both bad, and bad in many ways: and if the effects are in many instances happily less injurious than might have been expected, it is because in these cases the much-vaunted *theory of Independency is a dead letter*. In some Congregational churches, the minister possesses and exercises, in direct opposition to the democratic theory of the denomination, far more absolute and universal control than is ever, or ever can be, exercised by a Wesleyan minister. And by means of Congregational Unions and Home and Foreign Missionary Societies, the peculiar tendencies of the system are, to a considerable extent, counteracted. But this, again, is in opposition to the theory, as we now proceed to show.

Our position is, that the tendency of Congregationalism is unfavourable to an expansive missionary spirit, whilst its fundamental principles render it powerless for evangelical effort beyond already existing fields of labour.

As to the first of these points, we shall not say much ourselves. Who but must see that a system which almost compels each church to look upon its neighbour-

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church as a rival or antagonist interest, necessarily tends to produce a narrow, selfish spirit? Can such a condition of things be favourable to expansiveness of heart or catholicity of love? We dare not venture ourselves to speak the whole truth on this matter. We should be stigmatized as slanderous and bigoted. But we may be permitted to quote from Independents. The testimony of Mr. Miall, already cited in reference to the point of primitive organization, applies also here.

Conglomeration, in the place of diffusion,—several "*interests*," where there should be one church; a stronger motive to gather up than to scatter abroad, to concentrate than to diffuse, to entice in than to send forth; churches discountenancing all efforts which might re-distribute their own members, swelling into proportions too ample for convenient assembling in one place, yet frowning upon every proposition which might seem to threaten the birth and growth of a rival body; positively stifling, by their influence, all further enterprise in the same locality, and, instead of enlarging their borders, and making their moral force tell upon greater breadths of society, simply draining all religious life into their own reservoir, in process of years to stagnate and become corrupt.

This is Mr. Miall's picture of Independency. And is not the likeness in the main correct? But if any should question the authority of the editor of the "Nonconformist," we are content to abide by the judgment of the late Dr. Payne, who, in his "Lectures on Christian Theology," (vol. ii., pp. 487, 488,) expresses himself in the following terms:—

If a congregation expends all its zeal upon itself; if it displays little interest in the prosperity of neighbouring ones; if it puts forth no helping hand to assist them; and especially if it views their success with the cankered feelings of envy and jealousy; there can be no doubt that its members are grossly deceiving themselves, if they imagine they have any pure, unadulterated regard to the glory of God, and the extension of his kingdom.

Bear with me if I enlarge a little upon this point, as there are few things in the Dissenterism of the present day more offensive to me than the prevalence of this evil, against which I would guard you. To an individual who is deeply concerned for the honour and prosperity of our denomination, scarcely any thing can be more humbling and affecting than the sad lack of public spirit amongst us. How little disposed are our churches to regard themselves as constituting one army, and to feel that the success of one is the success of the whole! How feeble and lifeless the sympathy which pervades the body! How

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inconsiderable, in the case of any one Society, is the joy which the prosperity of sister-churches produces! How little regret does their want of success awaken! Nay; does not the truth compel us to acknowledge, that when the localities of churches are contiguous, they are apt to mourn over each other's growth and enlargement, and only to rejoice in each other's downfall? "Tell it not in Gath." *Proh pudor.* Even Heathenism itself would be disgraced by such conduct. I know not, however, that Heathenism bears upon it so foul a blot.

What a melancholy description is this! How fearfully does it accord with the censures of Mr. Miall! And how conclusively does it establish our assertions as to the *tendencies* of Independency! Even a small amount of Christian principle and feeling, unfettered and uncounteracted, is sufficient to produce some degree of real and disinterested brotherliness and catholicity of spirit. And, no doubt, in the churches to which the remarks of Mr. Miall and Dr. Payne apply, there is a considerable proportion of true Christianity. If not, how severe a reflection does this imply upon Independency! How happens it, then, that the actual temper of these churches towards those who should be their most cherished friends, as they are their nearest neighbours of the same denomination, is so jealous and anti-Christian? How happens it that this is *commonly* the case among Independents, so that the contrary is really the exception and not the rule? How happens it, we ask again, that Independents possess an unhappy singularity in this respect; that among Wesleyans, or Free Churchmen, this is not the case; nay, that even "Heathenism itself scarcely bears upon it so foul a blot?" We are driven to the conclusion that it is the *system* of Independency which engenders such evils; and that not even the diffusive charity of true religion is able, effectually, to counteract the tendencies to selfishness inherent in the system. How fearfully anti-Christian, then, must those tendencies be, if, even abated and counteracted by true religion, they yet so far prevail! And is it credible that the All-wise Being could have intended to embody the spirit of universal love in a system so necessarily, so essentially, obstructive of the best energies and activities of that love?

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We conclude, then, that a system, the necessary tendency of which is to counteract the energies, to limit the scope, to chill the heart, to pinion the arm, of Christian charity, to self-centre all thought and care, to transform every neighbour church, though called by the same name, and serving the same Master, into a rival, whose success is a source of sorrow, and whose failure is a cause of satisfaction; to cut off communion, and suppress sympathy; —that such a system cannot be the chosen instrument of the God of love, and the Saviour of the world, for the accomplishment of the purposes of His grace, and for the diffusion of His glory.

A system *adapted* to the spirit of Christianity; and, therefore, expansive, aggressive, missionary, in the tendencies and capabilities of its organization; must be the system of which the Author of Christianity approves.—And such a system is that of Methodism.

But not only is the spirit and tendency of Congregationalism opposed to the diffusive charity of true religion; its organization, also, is such as absolutely to forbid all effective evangelizing operations beyond already existing spheres of labour. This seems to be admitted by Mr. Binney. "If each society, and every individual, insists upon the exercise of their own liberties, unaffected by connexional relationships; if the voluntary principle is carried to the extent of all churches and congregations, of every size and in every place, each for itself, finding within itself the means of its own support; then," says Mr. Binney, "men may say what they please about divine ideas, or primitive models, but the fact is, that while, on such a system, you might have perfect liberty, Congregational Independency, and so forth; you could not have compactness or power as a body, strength from union, *nor ability to provide for the spiritual wants of small and poor patches of population.*" That is, *Independency as such*, Independency thoroughly carried out, *cannot evangelize, whether at home or abroad.* No minister has a right to exercise pastoral functions, except as chosen by the people to whom he ministers. But where there is no church to

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choose him, but a flock is to be gathered altogether from the world, what is he to do? Is he to collect one or two, and then ask them to choose him as their pastor, before he ventures to act as such? And is he thenceforward to perform no church-act without their sanction and concurrence? What *bizarre* work would this make upon mission stations!

It is self-evident, indeed, that an Independent minister, when he sets himself to the proper work of an evangelist, to missionary work, whether at home or abroad, must violate and reverse his own theory of church order and government. "He forms the church by his labours, where before there was none. He discharges his ministerial duties to the people who listen to him, not in consequence of their choice, but as sent by Christ. He must, for a considerable time, centre in his own person all spiritual authority, and be the fountain of church power and subordination. He may righteously—and will, one would hope, discreetly and firmly—impose upon those whom he receives into Christian association with himself, and to the benefits of his ministerial labours and oversight, whatever conditions he may think most conducive to the security and purity of their spiritual life." * And he will be guided, as to the share and influence which he shall concede to them in the management of church affairs, by their "growth in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ."

But we may be told, that the case of missionary churches is an exceptional case. It certainly ought not to be so. Every religious community ought to be, by its very organization, missionary. The ministers should all have scope to be evangelists; and the principle of mutual help—the principle of missionary enterprise—should unite all the churches. If, in Independency, such is not the case, this only proves the system to be essentially and vitally defective.

The case of infant and inexperienced churches an exceptional case in a Christian community! This is

* "Principles of Methodism," 1st edit. p. 83.

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much as if children were called an exception in families. The church *should be* a mother; and the churches the children of that mother, united in fraternal concord and affection, and eager to render mutual help. And the infants of this family should ever be a numerous and thriving company, cared for, guided, and sustained by the common love of the community, and especially by the aids of their nearest sister churches. The propagation of the faith, the planting and nurturing of churches, is as plainly and certainly the duty of the church of Christ, and the very purpose of its existence, as the multiplication and right training of children is the principal end of the family institute.

Independency, then, is essentially defective as an ecclesiastical system, not only because it makes no provision for the propagation of the gospel in "the regions beyond," or even in neglected patches hard by, but because *it is impossible to supply the needs of destitute portions of the great field of humanity, whether nearer or more remote, without violating the fundamental principles of Congregational Independency.*

The primitive church was accustomed to utter her voice from shore to shore, to send forth her messengers from city to city, from realm to realm. Commissioned by the Lord Jesus, they "went every where preaching the word." And wherever they went they gathered converts, and founded churches. They "ruled" from the first, and organized according to the Spirit of wisdom which was in them. The apostles or evangelists "ordained elders in every city," when fit men had been discovered and trained for the office; the elders "took the oversight of the flock," and were "obeyed" by them, as having received authority to "rule," and as "those that must give account" to Christ for the "flock over which they were appointed overseers."

But where, in all this, is the resemblance to modern Independency? Or how, under that system, could the word of God have so mightily and wonderfully grown and prevailed? Far different from this is the natural and

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normal growth of Congregational Independency. The old physical axiom, that "a thing cannot act where it is not," applies with a singular propriety to Independent churches. They can project to a distance no influence, or only as a faint and evanescent gleam; they can, consistently, initiate no enterprise abroad. They may spread slowly, church after church, from place to place: but that is all. Their deposition is like that of crystals from a chemical solution. Let the electrical conductor be introduced into the solution at a particular point, and crystallization will there commence. And therefrom and around that first formation as a centre, may crystal after crystal be deposited, till the operation is complete. So, yet not so surely or perfectly, might a system of Independent churches extend themselves among mankind. But, at this rate, when would the world be evangelized? Was any thing like this contemplated by our Lord, when He said to His disciples, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel unto every creature?"

The unsuitableness of the Independent system for the work of *spreading* Christianity, seems to be admitted by Dr. Wardlaw. Not only is there the absence, in his volume on Congregational Independency, of any attempt to evince the adaptation of the system for the propagation of the faith in unevangelized regions, whether at home or abroad, but he makes the following admission:—"That churches constituted on Independent principles do require a larger amount than others of the operation of certain Christian graces, in order to their prosperity:"—"that the churches formed upon its principles *cannot possibly prosper*, *can hardly continue to exist*, without the prevailing and dominant influence of humility, and love, and self-denial, and meekness, and forbearance." To our mind, this settles the question. Such a system as this, it is plain, could never be adapted to the condition of churches where the majority of the members were immature in knowledge, experience, and Christian attainments. No such church as that of Corinth, the members of which were "rather carnal than spiritual, and only babes in

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Christ;" (1 Cor. iii. 1;) or as that of the Hebrews, who, so far from being mature Christians, "though for the time they ought to have been teachers, had need to be taught again what were the first elements of the oracles of God, and needed, as babes, to be fed with milk, and not with meat;" (Heb. v. 12—14;)—no such churches as these "could have possibly prospered, hardly could they have existed," under such a system of government as that of the Independents. And yet this is the system for which, to the exclusion of every other, Divine right and primitive usage are pleaded. It is plain that, by such a system, churches could never be nursed into maturity. Surely it is most preposterous to claim universal acceptance for a system which supposes Christian maturity in all or the majority of its members, as the necessary condition of its working well. Such a system, utterly unfitted as it is for gathering churches among the unevangelized, whether Heathens or nominal Christians, or for nurturing and training their inexperienced and weakling infancy, cannot be that by means of which God designs to evangelize the world. Is it, then, the Divine purpose, by means of one system and agency, to "break up the fallow ground;" and then, by another, to complete the edification of the churches? Surely so disjointed and ill-fitting a plan cannot be attributed to the all-wise Head of the church. Doubtless the system which is the most efficient in evangelizing the altogether untaught,—in planting churches, and tending and rearing their infancy,—must also be that which, rightly administered and wisely adapted, will best promote the edification and full maturity of believers. God never intended to disjoin these two great branches of evangelistic duty,—to give one to one church, and another to another. On the contrary, to be directly connected with the work of evangelizing the untaught, of spreading the gospel, to be a missionary church, is one main contributive to the edification of the church in love. Nor can that church have sufficient scope for activity, sufficient exercise for its spiritual graces and faculties, which is not directly, and by its very organiza-

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tion, missionary. A self-centred and self-contained church is ever tending to become selfish, languid, and feeble.

To us it appears strange that Dr. Wardlaw should make, with such complacency, the admission we have quoted. He even accounts what we have been viewing as a defect, to be a positive merit. This is much as if we should praise a system of education, because, to prevent it from failing, it required a certain amount of mental qualification and previous knowledge not required by other systems. If Dr. Wardlaw could prove that the system of Independency usually developed and produced an order of piety never or but seldom attained to under any other system, this might help him a little. But this he cannot prove; nor is this his matter of congratulation. No; it is that Independent churches "cannot thrive, cannot be held together, without" very superior Christian attainments. We believe this as strongly as he; but (so differently do we look at things) we urge this as an argument against his system. There are some methods of rearing children which only the hardiest constitutions can survive; there are some bleak and exposed regions where the feeble or sickly plant will infallibly perish; and similarly we think that there are temptations and influences, in a pure and consistently carried out Independency, so opposed to the spirit of humility and love, that, without a much more than ordinary degree of these and kindred Christian graces, it is impossible Independent churches should "thrive;" and, if they are held together, it will be by any thing but that "charity which is the bond of perfectness."

That Dr. Wardlaw and those of his school should claim for such a system—one confessedly unfit for the work of rearing from their infancy, and evidently impotent to send abroad and plant, Christian churches—the praise of conformity to the primitive model, when the apostles and evangelists were ever planting, and their churches were all infant, seems to us to be one of those sheer extravagances into which the spirit of party has sometimes impelled even wise and able men.

We are quite prepared to be pointed, in reply to these

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strictures, to Congregational Unions and missionary institutions. But these afford no reply; they only prove that Independents are compelled, by love to Christ and souls, to violate their principles, to Connexionalize (after a fashion) their Independency, and to give their evangelists rights incompatible with the theory which derives all church-power from the sanction and authorization of the people. How utterly inconsistent the proceedings of Congregational Unions are with the true principles of Congregational Independency, whether as to the choice of pastors, or even, on some occasions, as to matters of internal arrangement or management, is very well known to all who have paid any attention to their proceedings, or conversed with their members.*

* The late excellent Mr. Ely, in one of his published sermons, preached before the members of the Congregational Union, in the year 1846, and dealing with the subject of Congregational Independency, lays down the principle, that a church dependent upon another for its support, may *perhaps* have a *veto* upon the appointment of its minister, but certainly cannot claim more than this. This principle is acted upon in Congregational Unions. Indeed, the *veto* cannot be really said to be conceded in many instances. But who does not see that such a principle, however equitable and natural, is fundamentally opposed to the theory of Independency? Let this but be granted to us, and we have the ποῦ στῶ, the *locus standi*, upon which we can easily construct the whole fabric of Wesleyan Connexionalism. But Mr. Ely grants even more than this. He justifies, in the case of dependent churches, an amount of "authoritative interference" on the part of the community which gives them aid substantially equivalent to the Connexional authority possessed by the Wesleyan Conference. The extract which follows will bear out these assertions:—

"Nor can I omit to remark, that a false notion of the rights of Independency seems to me often to interfere with missionary operations. A community of churches, by missionary zeal, plant a village church; that church depends on their funds: as long as they yield support, they have right of supervision and interference. It is with them to appoint the agent or the minister, to demand a statement of operation, to exercise authoritative interference. A *veto* is the utmost that the church can ask; and, in the election of a minister, this, perhaps, ought to be conceded." (ELY'S "Remains," p. 96.)

This sermon, preached by such a man, on such an occasion, doubtless expresses authoritatively the views of the leading spirits in the Congregational Union. It follows, that they have abandoned at the same time the Divine-right theory, and the distinctive principles, of Congregational Independency.

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CHAPTER IV.

EMPLOYMENT OF LAY-PREACHERS.—MINISTERIAL TRAINING.

In our last chapter, we examined the position of Independency in reference to that great purpose of church-organization,—evangelistic or missionary enterprise. We saw that each Independent church must exist in a condition of isolated antagonism, or, at the least, rivalry, with all surrounding churches; and that, being thus self-poised, self-contained, and exclusive, they must be, so far as the influence of their *Independency* goes, ever disposed rather to seclusion and selfishness, than to that self-sacrifice and diffusive charity which form the spring and strength of all successful and continued missionary enterprise. We saw, moreover, that not only the temper, but the theory, of Independency is opposed to diffusion or effort beyond already existing spheres of labour; that it is impossible for an evangelist to found and organize a church, without giving up and reversing the fundamental principles of Independency.

The next particular that will claim our attention, is the question of auxiliary lay-agency in the work of evangelizing. We refer especially to lay-preaching. No one will deny that in apostolic Christianity many, besides the appointed pastors of the churches, were accustomed to exercise a "gift of teaching," or of "exhortation." Nor can it be doubted that an auxiliary agency of this kind is essential to the completeness and success of every aggressive and missionary church. Methodism, from the first, has been distinguished by the successful employment of this great arm of missionary enterprise. Independency, on the other hand, except in rare and peculiar cases, (and then only in happy *inconsistency* with its character and principles,) has systematically dispensed with the labours of lay-preachers. On this point, no reasonable exception can be taken to the statements of Mr. Miall. The truth

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of his testimony will scarcely be called into question by any. The following extracts, as from the pen of a writer so able, so intimately acquainted both with the theory and working of Independency, and naturally so biassed in its favour, are entitled to serious attention.

The writings of the New Testament do not authorize the conclusion, that it is the prerogative, or the peculiar and *exclusive* duty, of any class in the church of Christ to communicate to others the gospel of God. Under the regulating moral power of the church's embodied authority, all the aptitudes, gifts, powers, and influences of each member are to be freely exercised, in accordance with the beautiful exhortation of the apostle, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given us; whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness."

* * * * *

It is but too apparent, that the needless multiplication of spiritual organizations in one locality, and *the appointment of a single minister over each*, but ill succeeds in eliciting either the life or the power of religious association. Our very mechanical arrangements, modelled, of course, in conformity with our ecclesiastical ideas, put a needless distance between teacher and taught, and exert a repressive influence upon the sympathies which should connect the one with the other. In each place of worship there stands the pulpit,—a visible symbol of *the monopoly of teaching*—a fixed memento to the church that it is to *one* individual they have to look for *all* those declarations, illustrations, and enforcements of the word of God, by which their minds are to be informed, their consciences stirred or comforted, or their hearts impressed and improved. The most seraphic piety, combined with the most splendid talents, can hardly, on this plan, prevent both devotion and instruction from becoming invested with an air of formality deeply injurious to freshness of religious feeling.

* * * * *

Can any one doubt that there lies, at this moment, hidden in the bosom of religious society, and dormant for want of all fitting scope for exercise, an immense amount and variety of talent, which might have been elicited and trained under happier auspices, and triumphantly employed in the prosecution of Christian objects?.....Now and then, strength of mind, associated with irrepressible religious zeal, makes its way through every disadvantage, and reads the church in connexion with which it works an impressive lesson on what may be done for Christ by unprofessional instrumentality. Such instances, however, are not numerous—are never likely to be under any system. *More, many times multiplied, are they whose energies wither for want of scope and exercise; many more in which the germs of useful talent,*

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always environed by a COLD ATMOSPHERE OF ROUTINE, *and stimulated by no external process of culture, never unfold themselves,* and pass away from their appointed scene of opportunity, without having so much as disclosed their presence.

* * * * *

Certainly, no mistake could well be more fatal than that of removing, from the instrumentality employed by the churches, that large admixture of spontaneous but duly regulated effort, which would have communicated to the whole the unimpeachable character of disinterestedness.....At present, *with one remarkable exception, the success of which ought to have elicited more serious investigation,*—I REFER TO THE WESLEYAN BODIES, and leaving out of sight recent attempts to employ what is called lay-agency,—*the* vivâ voce *exhibition of Christ's gospel to men, whether for purposes of edification or conversion, is, by common consent, made the peculiar function of a class set apart and supported for that express purpose. And this.....has thrown around the proclamation of the glad tidings an atmosphere of worldliness, which places the best, the holiest, the most self-denying, and heroically-disinterested of men under a fearful disadvantage.**

We deem these to be most important TRUTHS. In our opinion, this neglect or suppression of lay-agency is a serious item among the many vital errors or defects of modern Independency. It is plainly anti-scriptural, and as plainly it is a grievous wrong to an intelligent and pious laity, and a serious loss to the universal church. Great aids and advantages are foregone, noble spiritual powers, beneficent and happy energies, are left to wither in the germ, for want of opportunity and scope. How different is it in Wesleyan Methodism!

There we see, in perfect accordance with the primitive and apostolic precedents, opportunity afforded for the exercise of every gift of teaching possessed by the lay-members of the church, from that of the plain countryman, who occasionally delivers an "exhortation" in a neighbouring village, to that of the accomplished and meditative Christian gentleman, who, though not given up to the work of the ministry, is yet well able, by his public discourses, to edify his fellow-Christians. In this way, Wesleyans do honour to the endowments and promptings of that Spirit, whose "manifestations are

* MIALL, pp. 239, 259, 260, 275-277, 282-284.

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given to every man to profit withal," whose "diversities of operations" in different members are all intended to co-operate for the common good of the whole spiritual body, which is thus "fitly joined together and compacted by *that which every joint supplieth.*" In this way, a wholesome stimulus and exercise are given to the laity in general, tending to promote, directly or indirectly, mental and spiritual cultivation, and diligent inquiry into theological truth; the ministry itself is made to feel the benefit, being compelled, in order to maintain its relative position in the church, to elevate its own standard of theological attainment in proportion to the general intelligence and attainments of the community; an auxiliary force of vast reach and most various capabilities, adapted to every kind of work, and every order of society, is brought into association with the regular pastorate, and employed in manifold and most effective aggression upon the kingdom of darkness; and an impressive demonstration is exhibited to the world of disinterested and self-sacrificing devotion to the cause of truth and the salvation of men.

Look at Wesleyan Methodism as thus presented to our view! How massive in its unity—how mighty in its energy—how wonderfully and beautifully manifold in its agencies! How poor, how feeble, in comparison, the isolated atoms of Independency, where one church and one pastor make up the total of each church organism!

But we may be told that the absence of lay-agency, such as we have been describing, is not necessarily characteristic of Independency; that this is rather an accident, than an essential, of the system. This is an apology, however, which we cannot admit. How happens it, that, except in rare and exceptional cases, lay-preaching has never been familiar in Independent churches? The truth of the matter is, that where there is but one church, and one congregation, and this church and congregation are statedly ministered to by a fixed and separated pastor, there is plainly no scope or work for lay-preachers. There is nothing for them to do at home; the pastor does all here: nothing abroad; for this is an isolated, an inde-

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pendent church. There is one church, and one pastor; one congregation, and one chapel. What can a body of lay-preachers find to do in connexion with such an organization as this? *

Yet this is represented as a primitive and scriptural—as the primitive and the exclusively scriptural—church-system.

The next point of contrast between the two systems whose respective merits we are discussing, is that of ministerial training. As to this point, again, we shall borrow Mr. Miall's description of the plan which universally prevails in the Independent denomination. And whilst, as to the whole system of Independency, he must be a very competent witness, on perhaps no other is he, from the circumstances of his history, likely to be so competent as on this. The following are his remarks:—

I mention, first, ministerial education.—The modern process, which terminates in giving to a vacant church a minister of spiritual things, and which qualifies the subject of it for taking the oversight of a Christian community, is usually after this sort. A youth, generally from fifteen to two or three and twenty years of age, is happily, and through the mercy of God, brought into a state of sympathy with the gospel, receives the life-giving message, and rejoices in its salvation. He burns to consecrate his life to God, and experience has not yet instructed him that he may do so in *any* honourable calling.....He seeks and obtains an introduction into a theological seminary, where, in company with others like-minded, he travels through a routine of study,—classical, mathematical, philosophical, exegetical, and theological,—exercising himself occasionally in delivering discourses from neighbouring pulpits, and shielded, more or less carefully, by the regulations of the place, from the numerous temptations with which society abounds. At the close of his course, extending over three, four, or five years, an invitation commonly awaits him from a destitute church, which, having approved of his aptness to teach, calls him to "oversight," and receives him as an "elder."....It is to be observed, that, by our present method, the most important steps which can influence the character, or affect the efficiency, of the future teachers of Divine truth, are taken before the religious principle can have proved its genuineness, and before intellectual aptitude and qualifications can be determined. The

* The function of the "leaders" in the Wesleyan body constitutes another and very important branch of lay-teaching and agency; and their peculiar relation to our itinerancy and Connexionalism will be considered in another chapter.

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common views which prevail respecting the ministry, present it with no ordinary attraction to young and aspiring minds, as a sphere of active service. Our academies, founded upon an eleemosynary basis, and offering *an easy ingress* to an honourable and useful occupation, naturally increase those attractions, and tend to insure, if any thing can do, a large admixture of inferior influences in motives which should be kept unusually pure; *and from a career so likely to be entered upon without calm calculation, with an incorrect estimate of their own powers, and, occasionally, with a delusive view of their own religious character, our sentiments have cut off the practicability of any but a difficult retreat.* An education, in a great measure technical, having consumed exactly that portion of life within which a choice of calling is feasible, leaves a young man, at the end of his preparatory course, even when he has discovered his original mistake, nearly precluded from altering his destination.

Besides which,—

If, after receiving ordination, any should see fit to withdraw from the ministerial profession, they are regarded as, in some sense, desecrating what is sacred.....*I think it would be possible for the churches to wait the unfolding and ripening of spiritual character in their members, before giving practical aid to those contemplating the episcopal office, and to impress upon all who might aspire to fill that honourable sphere of labour, the importance of informing and disciplining the mind to as great an extent as possible, that if hereafter called to office, they might be prepared to discharge its duties with efficiency. Surely, if things were well ordered, and the spirit of the gospel were sincerely cherished, those desires which young men feel in the early days of their religious life for employment in the ministry, might be fostered as desires possible to be realized at some future period; and, pursuing their several worldly callings, and devoting such leisure as they could get to intellectual improvement, exercising, too, as opportunity offered, their "gifts," they might leave to the churches, in whose bosom they have their home, to determine for them whether, and when, they should enter office, as teachers in Christ's kingdom.**

Here Mr. Miall, while censuring the system of Independency, and sketching the general outline of a better and unexceptionable system, has, unconsciously to himself, delineated with singular accuracy Wesleyan Methodism, so far as its principles and provisions relate to ministerial training. Amongst Wesleyans all is already done which the remarks of Mr. Miall suggest as right to be done. The censures which apply with such emphasis

* MIALL, pp. 250—255.

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to Independency, have no applicability to Wesleyan Methodism. The guards and practical tests and training which he shows to be so needful, are already supplied. There is no "easy ingress" into our ministry or colleges; none can be accepted for the latter whose gifts and calling have not been proved in reference to the former; a candidate must have made good his vocation to the ministry before his ministerial education in our Institutions can commence. And the various tests and challenges which must be passed before a candidate for the holy office can be finally accepted, are of the most thorough and searching character. There must have been, in the first place, examination, acceptance, and employment as an assistant lay-preacher, the ministry and laity coinciding in approval of the candidate; then a public nomination by the pastorate, and acceptance and recommendation on the part of the Circuit-Meeting, as preliminary to his separation to the gospel of God; then a sifting examination before the assembled District-Meeting, as to doctrine, morals, and gifts; then a still more complete and particular examination as to all points before the London Board of Scrutiny; then a revision of the whole case in full Conference; then (unless the candidate is sent at once into the actual circuit work) there comes a two or three years' residence at one of our Institutions or colleges; even after the introduction into the regular work of the ministry, there is still a yearly scrutiny, not only of character, but of reading, general diligence and faithfulness, until the four years of probation are expired; and, finally, at the termination of the period of probation, the candidates undergo a public examination before the full Conference, and are publicly received, after a statement of their experience and call, before the great congregation.

Now, Independency *cannot* do all this; nor can it materially amend its present system. We have seen that, under ordinary circumstances, and in its pure and natural condition, Independency does not admit of a subsidiary lay-agency, employed in the work of public teaching and exhortation. Consequently, it possesses *no nursery for*

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the ministry, no introductory or preparatory grade of office, out of which suitable persons might be taken as candidates for the separated ministry; no preliminary condition in which capacity and fitness for the ministry may be discovered, tested, and trained. This is a *vital* want in a Christian community. In consequence of it, a youth, inexperienced, untested, untrained, must choose at once, and finally, whether he will devote himself to the sacred office or not. When comparatively "a babe," he must make an irrevocable decision, affecting most intimately his own eternal happiness, and that of many more through him. And he must do this without the possibility of that experience and probation, without which it must be, in almost all instances, impossible for either himself, or the members of the church with which he is connected, to be satisfied of the wisdom of his decision. Not such was the practice of the primitive church. Among them, none were committed to the work of the ministry, to the office of the episcopate, who had not, by frequent exercise of the "gift of teaching," *given proof* that they were "apt to teach," "holding fast the faithful word as they had been taught, that they might be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers," whilst their moral character also was approved and confirmed as "vigilant, sober, and of good behaviour." It was expressly ordered by St. Paul, that "no novice" (or neophyte) should be appointed to the ministerial office, "lest, being lifted up with pride, he should fall into the snare of the devil."

Further, as there is no preliminary grade or school adapted for calling forth and testing the gifts suitable for the pastoral office, so neither, in Independency, is there any, or more than a very slight, inducement for "the church" to care for the discovery and training of persons suitable for that office. Each church has its own wants provided for the present, and for an indefinite period to come: it feels little or no anxiety as to the possibility of supplying its needs in the remote future, and is less likely to look to its own bosom than to a foreign source for the

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supply of those needs, whenever they shall happen to arise. It is an *independent* church, having no direct or organic relation to any other church, or to any church-community, and therefore feels little or no interest in providing for general wants, with which its own concern is so very remote and so little practical. How can we expect that a church thus isolated and independent, should feel a very lively concern in providing for the general good, for the good of others merely, a seed of faithful and efficient ministers? The strong selfish and exclusive tendencies of Independency naturally oppose such a disinterested and far-sighted feeling. Besides, in Independent churches there is no organization to secure this. Not only, as we have seen, is there no organic grade or seminary from which the new succession of ministers might naturally rise into notice,—compelling attention and attracting kindly interest and care,—but there is no provision made for the due cherishing, guidance, and authorization, of those who may, from whatever motives or under whatever circumstances, have decided for themselves that the ministry is to be their future sphere of usefulness. Whatever is done in their case, is done incidentally, and, in a sense, irregularly. It is the mere voluntary and extra-ecclesiastical act of the church or of individuals. It is no proper and necessary church-function, or regular part of ministerial duty, to watch for, welcome, test, educate, and recommend suitable persons as candidates for the ministry. Here, as in other parts of Independency, ultra-voluntaryism becomes a vital and organic defect.

How different is it, again we say, in Wesleyan Methodism! Here all circuits feel their dependence upon the pastorate at large, for a supply, not only of senior, but of junior, ministers; hence all take a very lively interest in providing for the continued prosperity of the whole community, with which that of their own particular churches is so directly identified, in discovering, fostering, and training a continual succession of able and faithful men for the ministry. The ministers, for obvious reasons, ' a yet deeper interest in this matter than the people,

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whilst it is their special office to suggest, initiate, and guard whatever is done in this direction. And the class of local preachers furnishes an ever-green and springing nursery, from which the most hopeful and suitable persons may be transplanted into the ministerial body. At every stage, too, in the progress of the candidate, from first to last, the approval of both ministers and people is required to concur; so that as in the provision and training of suitable persons for the ministry ministers and people have a common interest, there is correspondently imposed upon them a common responsibility.

CHAPTER V.

ITINERANCY.—CLASS-LEADERS.

THE system which isolates the churches, of necessity also fixes the pastors, since it is impossible to conceive of a circulating community of pastors, unless there is an intercommunity of churches. Itinerancy, therefore, cannot be fitted to Independency. It is equally plain that, in a perfectly connexional, and at the same time purely voluntary, church, it will greatly conduce to that community of feeling and care which should correspond to the actual community of interest and responsibility, for the ministers who are directly and vitally related to the entire church, to circulate, as circumstances may suggest and admit, through the whole. Thus, and thus only, will each member of the body thoroughly realize its relation to the united pastorate, and each minister his relation to the whole church.

So that Itinerancy in some form would seem to be a necessary part of a thoroughly organized, consistent, and self-sustaining Connexionalism. And to whatever extent any minister becomes permanently and peculiarly identified with a particular locality, it will be easily seen that there is a danger lest local interests and peculiarities should so operate, as to infringe upon Connexional rights and prin-

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ciples. The ministers, in each locality, are the guardians of Connexional interests and rights, and the expounders and administrators of Connexional law. It is therefore needful, in order to secure their vigilance and impartiality, as acting in this character, that they be kept loose from all local interests and attachments. Otherwise, the guardian and representative of Connexional principles and rights might become himself the centre and bond of local prejudice and selfishness; and, instead of the diffusion and unity which the Connexional plan is intended to embody and perpetuate, local interests would, to a predominant extent, absorb and fix local cares and energies. Thus would the separate circuits become what Mr. Miall, in writing of Independent churches, very felicitously terms "ecclesiastical nodules," interrupting and obstructing the flow and pervasion of Connexional life and influence.

It is possible that some may think the Presbyterian churches furnish a conclusive example in opposition to the foregoing reasoning. But if we look at the case closely, we shall find that the opposition is only apparent. The Presbyterian churches have been established and endowed by the State; all their principles and regulations have been accurately and minutely defined in written codes; and these codes have been recognised not only as the statutes of the church, but as the law of the land. The State which endowed the church, adopted its disciplinary enactments, homologated them, as a Scotchman would say, as part and parcel of the statute law of the country, and, as such, *enforced* uniformity in their observance by the strong arm. The strongest reasons for Wesleyan Itinerancy, are the common dependence of the ministry on the united churches, and the necessity of securing for every circuit the presence of administrators of Connexional law, and expounders of Connexional principles, unbiassed by local prejudice or interest. But in church communities whose ministers are endowed, and whose laws are enforced by the state, these reasons cannot

Ours is a Connexion which, from the first, has irely dependent upon voluntary support, and each

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of whose funds and institutions is dependent upon the common support of the whole. In such a Connexion Itinerancy is a necessity.

We may be reminded that there are free Dissenting Presbyterian communities, also dependent principally upon voluntary support. But the dependence in these cases is by no means so complete as in Wesleyan Methodism, nor the "Connexionalism" so perfect or efficient. And, moreover, all these have come in for an inheritance of that originally enforced uniformity, which had been established in the church from which they separated, and from which, as to matters of ecclesiastical order and discipline, they have only slightly, if at all, dissented.

Further, there can be no doubt that even the legally-established Presbyterianism of the Scotch Kirk would have been more uniformly and perfectly carried out, than it has been,—for several parts of the "Books of Discipline" have never been more than a dead letter,—if the principle of Itinerancy, which was partially adopted, and, therefore, to that extent, sanctioned, by John Knox, had been more extensively acted upon, and permanently embodied in the kirk polity. In the Free Church, which is more truly and entirely voluntary, and far more thoroughly *Connexional*, than any of the other offsets from the Church of Scotland, we observe that the Itinerant principle is being, to some extent, adopted, and, to a greater extent, recommended. We venture to urge upon our Free-Church friends the necessity of introducing into their polity, systematically and permanently, some form or modification of Itinerancy: not such an amount or form of it, as is found in our own church, but so much, and in such a form, as may be best adapted to their peculiar circumstances, and to Scotch character and feelings.

The substance of the foregoing remarks is just this,—that Itinerancy, in some form, and to some considerable extent, is necessary to a perfect and consistent Connexionalism. It may be compared to the great circulatory system in the animal frame, by which life, energy, and unity are made to pervade the whole system, and which

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cannot be arrested or obstructed without disorder and injury, both at the point of obstruction, and, more or less, through the whole body.

But, further, an Itinerant ministry may be advocated on independent grounds; and so the advantages it is adapted to secure, will form a separate and, as we think, a very powerful argument in favour of Connexionalism.

In the first place, then, the Itinerant plan is adapted to secure superior life, power, and variety in the pulpit-addresses of the ministers. The fixture of a minister in one charge, year after year, is certainly not, of itself, calculated to promote the variety or liveliness of his ministrations. The same scenes, the same hearers, the same routine of duty, a continual demand upon resources which there is comparatively little in the uniformity of experience and circumstances to replenish or invigorate:—these are not conditions favourable in themselves to freshness of feeling, novelty of illustration, or vivacity of address. Monotony and formality are much more likely to be the result. "The most seraphic piety, combined with the most splendid talents," says Mr. Miall, "can scarcely avail to prevent this."

Be the Preachers' talents ever so great, (says Mr. Wesley,) they will, ere long, grow dead themselves, and so will most of those that hear them. I know, were I myself to preach one whole year in one place, I should preach both myself and most of my congregation asleep. Nor can I believe that it was ever the will of the Lord that any congregation should have one teacher only. We have found, by long and constant experience, that a change of teachers is best. This preacher has one talent; that another. No one whom I ever yet knew has all the talents which are needful for beginning, continuing, and perfecting the work of grace in a whole congregation.*

This remarkable quotation suggests that there will be a want of variety and compass in the ministrations of a fixed pastor, not only as a consequence of the circumstances in which he is placed, but of the limitation of his own mind. How rare and wonderful a mental organ must that be, which is furnished with all the pipes and stops,

* Wesley's "Works," 8vo. vol. xiii. p. 168.

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the moods and tones, the sympathies and capabilities, which are needful to answer to the various characters and conditions of a whole congregation for even one year, much more for many years together! Exceedingly well has the Rev. George Turner written on this point:—

That the ministry of some individuals is far more richly varied than that of others, is granted; but a man possessing "all the talents which are requisite for beginning, continuing, and perfecting the work of grace in a whole congregation," is yet, and to the end of time will probably remain, a *desideratum*. Fully to meet a case like this, must ever require the utmost energies of a *united* ministry, and, *cæteris paribus*, that is most likely to succeed which combines the fairest proportion of that diversity of talent which God has graciously bestowed upon the church at large: the son of consolation, and the son of thunder; the profound theologist, and the calm and lucid reasoner; the judicious expositor, and the impassioned preacher; the fire of youth, the vigour of manhood, the wisdom and the gravity of age; the sternness and severity of John the Baptist; the grandeur of Paul, the eloquence of Apollos; the vehemency of Cephas, and the simplicity and unction of the beloved disciple.*

The system of Itinerancy also secures a better *average* supply of talent for inferior circuits, than would be otherwise likely to be obtained. If the principle of locating permanently the pastors in different circuits were once adopted, it is evident that the men of intelligence and energy would become fixed in congenial spheres of labour, while inferior men would alone be left to supply the wants of inferior places, as is now the case, very generally, in Independent churches. As it is, in Wesleyan Methodism, the special needs of the circuits can be consulted and met. It not unfrequently happens that ministers of superior talents are sent, contrary to their natural inclination, to places of very inferior quality and attractions; and sometimes even to spheres of labour where, though they are much needed, they are little wanted. In this way something may be done to enlighten long-continued darkness, to remove old prejudices, and to rectify and organize disturbed or disorderly circuits.

* Quoted from the Rev. George Turner's very masterly and valuable "Essay on the Constitution of Wesleyan Methodism." pp. 109, 110.

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Again, on this plan a habit of ready utterance, and of homely, forcible expression, is acquired, such as is by no means so easy to be attained, and is, in fact, seldom attained, by the fixed pastor of one congregation. Preaching ordinarily from five to seven sermons a week, and many of these among country people, in houses or village chapels, the Wesleyan itinerant necessarily learns to "talk to" his audience, in a homely and familiar style. There may be instances, and some situations, in which Wesleyan ministers are in danger of falling into the formal, essayic style of deliverance, the sleek, well-combed propriety of phrase and manner, of which Mr. Miall so strongly and justly complains, and which too frequently prevail in Congregational pulpits. But this is not yet the general characteristic of Wesleyan preaching; and we have good hope that, ere long, idiomatic and conversational simplicity of style and illustration will become the standard and aim of all our ministers in all their pulpit addresses. Village preaching is an admirable training for the minister, and he who has learnt to gain and hold the attention, to inform the understandings, and to reach the hearts, of a village audience, has acquired the art of preaching. Such a man will be able, with a little study and experience, to adapt himself to any class of persons with which he is acquainted; and, if he has thoroughly mastered his subject, will always be able to bring it home to the minds and hearts of his hearers. Hence, the immense and universally-admitted superiority, on the whole, of Wesleyan ministers to those of other denominations, in the power of speaking, appropriately and powerfully, on the suggestion of the present subject, and at the shortest notice. Whereas, Independent ministers are even accustomed to require due notice before being requested to pray, and frequently precompose and commit to memory their prayers.

The Itinerant plan, also, by securing attachment, on the principle we have before explained, to the body of ·stors *as a whole*, and *to the system* as such, and apart m its individual administrators, tends to promote width

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of view, largeness of purpose, a disinterested regard for the general good, and an habitual reference to principle. These we deem to be elements of power and greatness, as embodied in the character and proceedings of any community. The love of Wesleyan Methodists is eminently to Wesleyan Methodism, as the most influential and successful embodiment of the spirit of Christianity; and they are accustomed to look above and beyond all individuals, and all individual interests, to the general prosperity and success. Such a condition of things necessarily tends to enlargement of soul, and operates as a counteractive to the natural selfishness and narrowness of the human heart. It seems strange that this very characteristic has been sometimes alleged as a *defect* in Methodism. Rightly considered, it is surely an *excellence*. It is true that ministers, in consequence, lose the opportunity of gaining, by their personal excellence and exertions, that local influence and respect which a long residence might have enabled them to acquire. But still it must be remembered that, wherever they come, they are welcomed by the societies as their own ministers, with that cordiality which is peculiar to Methodism, and which every arrangement in the system is calculated to promote. They have a ready-made influence, to which they succeed wherever they go. And, further, it ought not to be forgotten that, if the permanent residence and influence of one man cannot, among us, effect much good, by means of purely personal qualities and relations, as is sometimes done among Congregationalists; so neither can the continued incapacity, imprudence, or indolence of a fixed minister, ruin Methodism in any place, as other Dissenting "interests" are not unfrequently ruined.

On the Itinerant plan, too, difficulties can be overcome which would be insuperable were the minister fixed. A minister—to such an extent independent of any locality, that, even though rejected or unpopular there, he can still, if faithful to Methodism and Christ, always be sure, at the ensuing Conference, of having an appointment somewhere else—can dare to do right, in spite of local

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factions or corruptions; whilst, in similar circumstances, an Independent fixed pastor would probably be compelled to yield to what is wrong.

Nor is Itinerancy less favourable to the rights and convenience of the people than to the true independence of ministers. No minister can be, on the system of Wesleyan Itinerancy, permanently and immovably fixed in the oversight of an unwilling people. Among the Independents, a pastor, once chosen by a church, claims the pulpit as his freehold, in the possession of which he is maintained by the law of the land. He may become indolent, wayward, or even inconsistent and un-Christian in his behaviour; still the church has, in most cases, no power whatever to remove him. They may, indeed, "starve him out," as it is technically called, if he has no private resources; but that is all they can do. Sometimes they endeavour to "buy him out." But, in such cases, the retiring pastor will generally ask a round sum for the favour of his retirement. Is it right, is it according to the principles of Christianity, that a pastor should be thus permanently, unconditionally, irreversibly fixed in a charge, however unsuitable a lengthened experience may prove him to be for the position he holds, or however he may degenerate from his original piety and zeal? Is not this a "heavy bondage, and grievous to be borne?" Is this the *liberty* which our Independent friends invite us to share? Of course, the alternative to this would be, that the minister, although once chosen, should be at any time removable at the pleasure of his flock. This would be plainly even a greater injustice and injury than the other arrangement; and the law of the land is never likely to permit it. Between the two alternatives, Independency permits of no medium. There can be no third way of escape, precisely because each Independent church, as such, necessarily rejects all external right of interference. There is no general court or community to whom, or their representative authorities, any matter of difference between pastor and flock might be referred for [illegible]ration. The pastor would be absolutely at the mercy

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of his flock but for his legal tenure of the pulpit; whilst this, again, puts the flock, in some instances, and in regard to some matters, absolutely and most injuriously in the power of the pastor. In Wesleyan Methodism, on the contrary, though the Conference has, and obviously must both of right and of necessity have, the power of appointing for one year any accredited minister to any circuit; yet this minister cannot be imposed a second year contrary to the will of the circuit. So that, in reference to the appointment of ministers, Wesleyan Methodism far more equably and surely provides for justice to the people than is or can be done on the system of Independency.

Of course, Itinerancy has its disadvantages as well as its advantages. What finite plan has not? What is this but saying, that sunlight brings with it shadow? The tie is scarcely formed between a circuit and its ministers, before it is again broken; and in each new circuit the task of becoming acquainted with the members, which, in the previous circuit, had just been mastered, has to be recommenced. But it is wonderful how soon a Wesleyan minister comes to know, and be at home with, all his people, and they with him. Mutual trust is the bond of the system; and Methodist hearts quickly warm to each other.

Besides, to supplement the pastoral labours of the separated ministry; to afford that minute and constant attention to the spiritual wants of the people which it is out of the ministers' power to give; to form a permanent tie between the members and the pastorate, though the pastors themselves be ever changing; the office of "leader" and the institution of "classes" have been provided in the Wesleyan economy. The people are divided into small companies, called "classes;" and over each of these is appointed an established Christian, called a "leader," to take the constant oversight of the members of his class, inquiring into their spiritual condition, watching over their Christian deportment, taking the conduct of their weekly meetings, and giving such advices to each of the members, both at the class-meeting, and, if needful, in

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private, as their several cases may require. These leaders are, or should be, if possible, themselves met weekly by the ministers, whose council they form as to all the affairs of the society, and to whom it is their duty to report all special cases in their classes which may require the advice or personal visitation of the ministers; and once a quarter, at the "quarterly visitation," as it is called, all the classes are met by the ministers themselves, at which time, in the proper exercise of their pastoral office, they examine into the spiritual condition of every member of their charge, and give or renew to them their "ticket" of membership.

It will be at once seen how beautifully this plan supplements the Itinerancy of Wesleyan Methodism. Without it, the connexion between the ever-changing ministers and the people would, of necessity, be extremely loose; pastoral oversight would scarcely exist even in name; and, although many sinners might be awakened and converted, there would be no effectual provision for the spiritual edification of the churches. But, on the Wesleyan plan, the aggressive energies and adaptations of Itinerancy are united with the conservative efficiency of a permanent pastoral provision. The leaders form a spiritual diaconate, representative and supplementary of the pastoral office; and, while the ministers change, the leaders, who form their council and supply their lack of service, are, generally speaking, fixed.

Whether or not, in the case of *superintendents*, especially in the large towns, and after they have fulfilled a respectable term of service, it might be well for them, if wished by the people, to continue for a longer period than three years in the same circuit, is a point upon which we are not called to pronounce an opinion. Our argument is general. We advocate Itinerancy as opposed to a fixed ministry; and we are convinced that the latter, when weighed in the balances, must be found wanting. And, as to our present modification of Itinerancy, it has worked well, it still works well; and, even supposing any new modification might, in theory, seem desirable, we

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ought to pause long before we determined to adopt it, even if it were possible to do so,—if the legal basis and guarantee of Wesleyan Methodism, as it now stands, did not render any alteration of our Itinerancy impossible.

CHAPTER VI.

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF CONGREGATIONAL INDEPENDENCY CONSIDERED.

In our former chapters the system of Independency has been shown to be opposed to the spirit and principles of the New Testament, and to be wanting in almost every provision requisite either for the secure edification in the pure faith and in true holiness of the churches of Christ, or for the effectual extension of the kingdom of Christ in the world. Upon what pleas or apparent arguments, then, we shall be asked, can such a system as this be founded? How comes it, if the reasons against it are so many and powerful, that it has, notwithstanding, obtained so many adherents?

The reason we take to be in the main this, that Independency, though it does not accord with scripture, agrees well with certain principles of political democracy, and with certain likings of human nature. A subordinate reason may be that the High Churchism to which Independency is the antithesis, has by its corruption and despotism produced a powerful re-action in favour of opposite principles.

But it is only due to Independency that we should examine particularly the arguments which have been or may be adduced in its favour.

The grounds upon which Independency rests are these:—

1. A true principle misunderstood. 2. A false principle foolishly applied. 3. Two or three places of scripture misinterpreted.

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1. *A true principle misunderstood.*

Under the new dispensation, it is said, all believers are equal. The priesthood is universal. All are sacred persons; and therefore the distinction of order—as between priests and people, the ministers of God in holy things, and those who only wait in his courts—no longer exists. This, we are told, was a part of the bondage of Judaism, from which Christians are set free. To all this the reply is plain enough. There is no *such* distinction as existed under the Mosaic institute; but there is a distinction. All Christians are undoubtedly priests unto God; but theirs is a spiritual priesthood; they are called "to offer," each within the temple of the renewed spirit, and on the altar of his own heart, "spiritual sacrifices." So also all Christians are "kings;" "kings and priests unto God, even the Father." But, notwithstanding this, all are not elders or bishops. And the scripture no more teaches or implies the ecclesiastical, than the civil, equality of all believers. The same scripture which enjoins that, notwithstanding there is no longer "male nor female, bond nor free, but all are one in Christ Jesus," still children should dutifully obey their parents, wives duly reverence their husbands, and servants obey "in all things their masters according to the flesh;" enjoins also, and with equal explicitness, that the members of a Christian church should "obey them that have the rule over them, and submit themselves, seeing that they watch over their souls, as those that must give account." The doctrine of the universal priesthood, and of the equality in Christ, of all true Christians, does not at all interfere with the principle of the official superiority and authority in the churches of the separated ministers of Christ. Misunderstood, however, this doctrine has not only disposed many to accept the principles of Congregational democracy, but has legitimately developed itself in such forms as Quakerism and Plymouthism. And if it is sound and true, it must, in all consistency, be pressed to such results as these.

2. *A false principle foolishly applied.*

It is, first, assumed that the economy of Christ's spiritual king-

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dom upon earth is, or should be, analogous to the civil and political economy of the commonwealths of this world; and, then, that those commonwealths ought to be grounded, arranged, and conducted on the republican theory. Hence, as, according to the republican theory of government, all power is virtually, and ought to be professedly and formally, derived from the people, it is concluded that all church-power should be considered as originally belonging to, and vested in, the people, and that all church-offices should be derived from popular suffrage.

It is clear that, if either of the assumptions upon which this conclusion rests is incorrect, the deduction founded upon both must fall to the ground. Wesleyan Methodists, for the most part, will deny them both. They will neither allow that the people are the only, or the only proper, fountain of authority; nor that voluntary Christian communities are to be regulated according to analogies drawn from the necessarily compulsory governments of this present mixed and evil world. The power of civil governments must indeed be based upon the people, and maintained by at least their passive consent; but it is a mere fiction to affirm that such power is, of necessity, originally derived from the people. The captaincy of a nation has much more frequently grown from patriarchal precedence and authority, than been conferred by popular suffrage; and the strong who give protection, or deliver from wrong, have some claim, in their own right, as well as from the consent of the weaker multitude, to enforce, up to a certain point, obedience and tribute. But, even if the extreme republican or democratic theory of civil and political rights and government were better founded than it is, it would never be allowable to transfer that theory to the government of that kingdom which is not of this world. The governmental power and polity of all religious communities should be founded on the commission and laws of Christ. A minister derives his authority from Christ, to whom he must give account. He must, indeed, be accepted by a Christian community as their minister, before he has any right to exercise ministerial authority and privilege among them. But, then, they ought to receive him as the minister of Christ, not as their hireling; as set over them by Christ, not as simply doing their work for their pay. If they should be dissatisfied with his conduct, they and he may or must separate; but so long as he remains among them as a minister, he must exercise ministerial authority. He is not at liberty to teach or rule according to their pleasure or dictation; for Christ has prescribed the doctrine which he shall teach, and the laws which he shall enforce. If they object to hear doctrines which he believes the Spirit of Christ to have laid down in holy scripture, they must submit to him, or he must leave them. He is not at liberty to adulterate, to their taste, the doctrine of truth, and purity, and salvation. So, again, he cannot lower, abrogate, or modify the laws of Christ, to meet their approval. He is "Christ's minister," made by Him a "steward of His mysteries," put into this office because "accounted faithful," appointed, on behalf of the "Chief Shepherd," to "watch for souls, as one that must give account," and required,

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as such, by impartial "*manifestation of the truth*, to commend himself to every man's *conscience in the sight of God*," to "preach *the word*," to "*reprove, rebuke, exhort*, with all *fidelity*," to "*reject*" the factious or immoral; and this he must do, not according to the humour of a congregation or church, but as *the Book* tells him, on peril of his soul's salvation, if he be partial or unfaithful. He is to expound, maintain, and enforce, not the *decrees* of the *community*, but the truth and laws of Christ, "whether they will hear or whether they will forbear."

This last consideration is sufficient to invalidate, fundamentally, the analogy so often implied as subsisting, or having a right to subsist, between the constitution of civil communities, and of the churches of Christ. Civil communities have a right to make and unmake their own laws; but the churches of Christ have no right to repeal or modify the laws which He has ordained, and His ministers are bound to enforce.*

The principle, then, is false; namely, that all civil and political power is, or ought to be, derived from the people; and, if it were true, it would be very foolish to apply it to the matter of ministerial authority and church-government.

3. *Two or three places of scripture misinterpreted.*

Dr. Wardlaw is probably the ablest living advocate of Independency, and, in his recent work on Congregational Independency, brings forward just two arguments from scripture, and these only inferential, in support of his system. The first is founded upon Matt. xviii. 15—17: "If thy brother trespass against thee," &c.; and the second, upon the passages in the epistles to the Corinthians, relating to the incestuous person. (1 Cor. v. 11—13; vi. 1, 2; 2 Cor. ii. 6.)

We shall not need to be detained long by a consideration of these passages.

Matt. xviii. 15—17, refers not at all to questions of church-discipline or authority, but only to private differences between man and man; was originally a direction, not at all for Christian churches, but for Jewish synagogues, and embodies a *principle* which, from the first, has been acted upon among Wesleyan Methodists. It seems strange, indeed, how any simple-minded person, or per-

* "Principles of Methodism," 1st edit. pp. 80—83.

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haps we should say in another sense, how any *but* a *very* simple-minded person, could suppose that this passage has any bearing upon the question, either of popular rights, the rights of private members, or of ministerial precedence and authority. And it seems still more strange that any intelligent Independent should imagine that the Jewish synagogue could furnish any precedent for the practice of an Independent church. It would be as feasible to deduce rules for American democracy from the practice of Rome in the palmiest days of patrician power and exclusiveness. It is plain that, so far as authority and executive power went, the elders and rulers of the synagogue constituted "the church." *

Nor will the other argument, upon which Dr. Wardlaw relies, better endure analysis or pressure than this. If our readers will refer to 1 Cor. v. 11, and vi. 1, 2, they will perceive that all they teach is, that Christian people should so far discern and judge respecting their brethren, as to shun the company of the immoral, and be separated from them; and that, for fear of scandal among the Heathen, they should settle their matters of dispute, not by a resort to the ordinary courts of law, but by arbitration among themselves. Here is not a word going to imply that Christian ministers are to be put on a level, as to authority, with the people, or that the latter have all a right to exercise formal and solemn judicial and disciplinary functions.

But the former of these passages suggests, in fact, an argument of the greatest force *against* the Independent principles of popular power. It was penned with a not very remote reference to the incestuous person whom St. Paul, without a trial,—for his guilt was palpable and not denied,—and *against* the partiality and will of almost the whole Corinthian church which was in favour of his continuing in communion with them, sentenced to be cut off from the church. It matters not to say that St. Paul was infallible, and an apostle; that only proves that he *did right, in enforcing Christ's law, because it was Christ's law, contrary to the popular will;* and, therefore, that the popular will is *not* to be the final authority in matters of church discipline, but the law of Christ, as administered by the minister of

* See NEANDER'S "Church History, vol. i. pp. 250—253.

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Christ. St. Paul's fiat could not annihilate a popular *right*, if that were just in itself, and scriptural. If the Independent theory of necessary and divine popular right, in matters of church discipline, is correct, then Paul was wrong.

Paul's reasoning, reproof, and authoritative sentence, however, convinced the understanding and turned the hearts of the major part of the Corinthian church, who, therefore, carried into effect his sentence against the offender. *Hence* (in 2 Cor. ii. 6, the remaining passage to which our Independent brethren refer on this subject) his punishment is said to have been inflicted of many, τῶν πλειόνων, the major part. But it was Paul who, by his sole authority, issued the sentence, and enforced the infliction.

It is further to be noticed, that there seems to be little doubt that the Corinthian church, at this time, was in a rudimentary and embryotic state, destitute of a regular government and pastorate.*

No one can attentively study the Epistles to the Corinthian church without feeling how difficult it is to reconcile the condition of that church, as disclosed in those Epistles, with the idea of a regularly-settled church, conducted and controlled in an orderly manner by a council of elders or bishops. Nor is there an allusion, from first to last, which implies the existence of any regular church-officers or systematic church-organization. It appears much more probable that, at this time, the Corinthian church subsisted under a merely temporary and introductory arrangement, in which, though there were supernatural "gifts" of "teaching," "helps," and "governments," there were no formally-appointed and permanent elders or deacons. Such must have been the first condition of every church, since it is certain fit persons for the office of elder could not all at once be found. There must have been training and testing, or, as St. Paul says, *proving*, before ordination could take place. Let the directions to Timothy and Titus be considered, and it will be at once perceived that not supernatural gifts, but a trained and developed spiritual intelligence and character, fitted a Christian for permanent pastoral office in the church of Christ. Hence we find that it was only on a second or subsequent visit that the

* "Principles of Methodism," 1st edit. pp. 85, 86.

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apostles or their substitutes ordained elders in the various cities where they had founded churches. The first stage in the spiritual history of each apostolic church must, therefore, have been one in which extraordinary gifts in the various members, and the supernatural insight and absolute authority of the apostles, supplied the place of a regular organization and government. Taking the light of this principle to guide us, we shall find no difficulty in understanding the two following passages from the Epistles to the Corinthians and the Romans, which have given much trouble to commentators.

"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness." (Rom. xii. 6—8.)

"And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." (1 Cor. xii. 28.)

And we shall easily understand, also, how it happened that, in the Corinthian church, the execution of judgment upon the offenders was given in charge, not to the elders, but to the whole church. There was, in fact, at this time no regularly-appointed and permanent executive in the church.

It will be seen, too, that, if this matter is as we say, it is foolish, indeed, to refer to primitive and apostolic *precedent* as to matters of church-order. The precedent of the first years of Paul's ministry differed from that of the last years. Church-organization, even in apostolic times, *developed*. *At first*, even where elders were appointed, it is probable that some were ordained to *rule* who were little competent to *teach*, formally or extensively. (1 Tim. v. 17; Rom. xii. 6, 7.) Instructed, experienced, competent persons, qualified both to teach and rule, were not so numerous at the time of the first ordination of elders as

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they afterwards became. Just so much we are inclined to concede to the Presbyterians, in reference to the matter of the "ruling elder," as distinguished from those who both ruled and taught. But, that this distinction was not intended to be permanently embodied in the polity of the churches of Christ, is sufficiently plain from the requirement of the apostle in the Epistles to Timothy, that elders or bishops, as such, should be "apt to teach." (1 Tim. iii. 2; 2 Tim. ii. 24.) The later date of these Epistles, as compared with the period of the formation of the principal apostolic churches, explains this direction, which, it will be seen, is absolute and repeated.*

We feel inclined to insist a little on this fact of the *development* of church-polity even in apostolic times, because it will be seen that it entirely upsets the dogma of divine right, as claimed by any *church-model*, whether Independent, Presbyterian, or Episcopal. A very few general principles may be discovered in scripture, which *every* system of church-polity ought to embody, and in consistency with which the whole system ought to be framed. The chief of these have been specified in these papers. But, these principles being made sure of, the form of church-polity may, in other respects, and as to points of detail, be adapted to the various situations and exigencies of this various and changeful world. Our charge against Independency is, that, whilst pretending to a strict conformity to the apostolic model, and wasting an inordinate amount of affection upon certain points, which are, at most, but obscurely intimated in scripture, and which none but Independents believe to be contained in scripture at all, it has quite lost sight of several of those great principles which should give spirit and character to every Christian church. And our claim on behalf of Wesleyan Methodism is, that, though doubtless imperfect in some of its details, and possibly incorrect in some of its

* See, in confirmation of these views, NEANDER'S "Church History," vol. i. pp. 255, 256, 260; (Clark's edition;) and his "Planting of the Churches," vol. i. pp. 174—178.

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adjustments, it nevertheless to the present age represents, as no other church does, in power, and unity, and manifold application, the cardinal principles of apostolic church-organization.

CHAPTER VII.

THE POPULAR ELEMENT.

We have already indicated, with sufficient clearness, the position which we maintain as to this point. But as it is the characteristic boast of Independency that the popular element receives its full and fair development among them, and as it is often objected to Wesleyan Methodism that in this respect, at least, it is wanting, we propose to devote a separate chapter to the examination of the subject.

There are two grounds upon which the question of popular claims in church matters may be discussed,—the ground of explicit scripture authority, and of Christian propriety and expediency.

The question of scripture authority on this point has already been discussed, especially in the second and last chapters; and it has appeared that while in the New Testament the rights and duties of *ministers* are very often explicitly stated, and more often still plainly implied, not only is the relation of *the people* to church discipline nowhere defined or explicitly indicated, but there exists no precedent from which anything can be certainly inferred in reference to the position which they were intended to hold in the conduct of the spiritual commonwealth.

The utmost that scripture will yield to an unbiassed and considerate expositor, is the general principle that the people shall, as far as possible, be taken along with the ministers in all decisions affecting the general interest. We are inclined to concede that as much as this is taught

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us by the narrative in Acts xv. We are quite prepared to adopt, in reference to the people's share in this transaction, the words of a distinguished expositor and defender of Congregationalist principles. "They are not treated," says Dr. Wardlaw, "with unceremonious exclusion, or supercilious oblivion. They are present to hear; they acquiesce in the decision; they are united with the apostles and elders in the communication of the result [to the Gentile churches.]" Here however the decision, affecting, as it did, important points of Christian practice, and touching also upon some questions of evangelical doctrine, was not submitted in any way to the judgment of the people. It was sanctioned and authenticated by the fiat of the apostles and elders. Its reasons were expounded to "the multitude," and their acquiescence was announced, but that was all. On this particular we are at one with Dr. Wardlaw.

In Acts vi., however, we have the narrative of a very different transaction, in connexion with which deacons were first appointed. Here the matter in debate was merely temporal and financial; it was, as much as any church-matter may be, quite a people's affair. The funds to be distributed were from the people, and the parties to be relieved were the church's poor. Here, accordingly, we find the "multitude of the disciples" taking direct action and exercising real functions. A change was to be proposed in the method of distributing their offerings, and an altogether new class of officers was to be appointed; it was reasonable that the people should be called together to consider these things. And as there were, at this time, no people's officers or representatives, as, in fact, the church at Jerusalem was not yet organized, it is plain that, without such an assemblage of the church, the apostles could scarcely with justice or prudence have changed the manner of distributing the public charities, and certainly could not conveniently or to the general satisfaction have instituted a new office, and appointed persons to fill it. The church then is called together; the affair is laid before them, and the best course to be taken is indicated,

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by the apostles. In compliance with their recommendation, the multitude choose and propose for the new office seven men, who are brought to the apostles for their sanction and formal appointment; so that, while the people selected and proposed in this case, the final ratification and appointment, with the power of *veto*, remained with the apostles. This, be it remembered, was a purely temporal affair, and related directly only to the people's interest; and the principle involved in the proceeding is, that, in such matters, the ministry and the people ought to have a mutual check; and that temporal or financial officers, placed in charge of the people's interests, should be appointed in such a way as to secure the concurrence and confidence both of the people whose property is in their charge, and of the ministerial executive in connexion with whom they must act.

The precedent which Independents have endeavoured to deduce from the case of the Corinthian church, was examined in our last chapter, and shown to be utterly worthless. This case can furnish no precedent whatever for the general conduct of church affairs, as it was itself anomalous and exceptional. But, even if we were to admit its authority, we have proved that, fairly interpreted, the utmost it could teach would be that the people may be taken into union with the ministry in the pronunciation of church censures. The *authority* of the church, in this case, was plainly nothing. They were constrained to obey the behest, and to declare and enforce the decision, of the apostle.

As to the appointment of ministers in the church, all the information which the scripture affords is that this was done by the apostles, or their itinerant representatives. (Acts xiv. 23; 2 Tim. ii. 2; Tit. i. 3.) It is *probable*, also, that the already existing ministry joined in sanctioning and authenticating the appointment. (1 Tim. iv. 14.) How far, or in what way, the church in general concurred in such appointments, is neither declared nor in any way intimated.

So in reference to church discipline in general, all we

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are taught is, that the elders or bishops were mildly to "rule," and the people cheerfully and lovingly to "obey;" but what limits should be set to ministerial authority, or what rights should be conceded to the people, are matters as to which scripture gives not even a hint.

We think, however, that the narratives in Acts xv. and Acts vi., sanction the general principle which we have stated, that, as far as possible, the people ought to be taken along with the ministerial executive in all decisions affecting the general interest. They are not to be left in the dark as to public questions, and the reasons of public measures. On such matters they should receive full information, and their concurrence and approval should, as far as possible, be secured. And, in the appointment of officers for the church, it is plainly desirable, that the persons chosen should be such as possess the respect and confidence of the people, as well as the approval of the ministers. Especially would this be desirable and right when the office in question related directly only to the temporal affairs of the church and the interests of the laity. Though, even in this case, the approbation of the ministers, the "rulers" of the churches, should be a *sine quâ non.*

Such appears to be the sum of what may be learnt from scripture on this point.

We add the judgment of the sagacious Neander respecting this matter, which, it will be seen, quite coincides with our own deduction:—

> As regards the election to these church-offices, we are in want of sufficient information to enable us to decide how it was managed in the early apostolic times.....It may have been the general practice for the presbyters themselves, in case of a vacancy, to propose another to the community in the place of the person deceased, leaving it to the whole body either to approve or decline their selection for reasons assigned. Where asking the consent of the community had not yet become a mere formality, this mode of filling church-offices had the salutary effect of causing the votes of the majority to be guided by those capable of judging, and of suppressing divisions: while, at the same time, no one was obtruded on the community who would not be welcome to their hearts.*

* "Church History," vol. i. p. 258.

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We stay, for a moment, in passing, to remark how precisely this agrees with the spirit and practice of Wesleyan Methodism in every department, and how utterly at variance it is with the principles of Independency.

If, leaving scripture, we ask, "What would be the teaching of an enlightened and Christian expediency on this point?" we shall receive the same reply,—that, as far as possible, in all matters of church regulation and discipline, the people shall be taken along with the ministry. The voice of brotherly love persuades to this, Christian equity requires it, sound and provident policy prescribes it.

But the question immediately occurs, How far *is* it possible to do this? If all is not to be conceded to the people, and the ruling authority and prerogative of the ministry are not to be annihilated,—which would be a plain violation of scripture principle and precept,—then we must somewhere fix limits to concession. What are those limits? Are they like the statutes of morality, fixed and immutable, or are they various and movable, according to the various circumstances and relations of the church, and the varying development of Christian intelligence and character?

We believe that there is a certain point, beyond which concession must in no case pass; that there are certain ministerial prerogatives which are sacred, and without the preservation of which, untouched, no minister can fully and aright meet his responsibilities, and discharge his duty to Christ; but that, up to this point, the amount of concession to popular influence must vary according to varying circumstances.

For example, it will be admitted by all that it would be simply absurd to give to a newly-gathered church of South-African troglodytes, or Ceylonese tree-lodgers, or Australian savages, the same powers and functions which are exercised by the church of a Jay or a James in England. It would be an un-Christian farce to do this. Such untutored children of the wild must be informed and trained before they can be prepared to take any part whatever in church discipline, or possess any share of

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ecclesiastical authority. Now, these extreme cases prove the principle. And scarcely less sunk in brutal ignorance than Bushmen, or less savage than New-Zealanders, were many of the converts gathered into church association by John Wesley a hundred years ago.

But, in proportion as the laity of a church advance in intelligence, and the discipline of Christian culture, it is fit and right that they should be taken into closer and more frequent association with the ministry in church counsels and decisions. Many men in many churches are eminently fitted to tender advice, and to add authority in questions and decisions connected with ecclesiastical regulation and administration. And it is the duty of the church to use, and to find scope for, every faculty possessed by its members. Still, if the ministry has imposed upon it a *peculiar responsibility* and *special duties*, in relation to the laity at large, it is clear that there must ever be reserved to it a *peculiar authority*, and *special prerogatives*.

Now, according to the theory of Independency, the minister is deprived of all peculiar and official authority; he is merely, as Angell James says, a "speaking brother;" or, at most, he is, beyond this, nothing more than chairman of the church meeting, with a casting vote, bound, *on all points*, to submit to the decision of the majority. He has burden, but not power; office, without prerogative; and responsibility, without authority. He is a ruler only in name; in reality, he is the hired servant and organ of the people. And yet he would be esteemed the minister of Christ, overseer and pastor of the flock of Christ, and, as such, appointed by, and responsible to, the Great Shepherd,—"ruler over the Master's household, to give them meat in due season." As if there could be two supremes,—the people, and the Lord; and as if the same person could derive ultimate authority from both! Or, as if, while finally responsible to Christ for fidelity to his truth and commandments, he could, at the same time, be unconditionally and invariably amenable to the will of the people!

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The Independent theory, then, we cannot accept. It virtually denies the Headship of Christ, and reduces His church to the level of a merely human institution.

In reference to Wesleyan Methodism, the question to be asked is, whether the ministerial authority is injuriously predominant in the system; or whether, if it has not in all departments been reduced to a *minimum*, it is not at any rate quite as little and as low as, under present circumstances, is compatible with ministerial fidelity, and the effective working of the system.

During the life of Wesley, Methodism was undoubtedly, in technical language, a pure ministerial despotism. Not only was the Conference from the first supreme, and Mr. Wesley's authority in the intervals between the Conferences universal and absolute, but in the government of the various societies and circuits the laity had no voice or share whatever, much less had they any part, direct or indirect, in general legislation. The leaders themselves had no more power or prerogative in the government of the Societies than, to use Mr. Wesley's own word, "the doorkeeper." The leaders and stewards were appointed by the sole authority of the preachers, without any conjunction of the laity. In fine, all things were ruled absolutely by Mr. Wesley and his "assistants," without the least popular interference or concurrence. Even temporal and financial concerns were, to a great extent, absorbed into the all-embracing scope and management of the ministerial body.

Yet we must ever remember, that this pure despotism was entirely dependent upon voluntary support. No secular arm or legal endowment sustained it. Of these it was as destitute as it was of every quality likely to secure popular favour. It was a system which, with John Baptist-like fidelity and vehemence, stood up to oppose and to denounce every vain fashion and every criminal pleasure of the world. In its morality it was austere and self-denying. The zeal it required was such as forbad all soft and slothful indulgence. What, then, could sustain such a despotism as this in growing vigour and ever-

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extending dominion through half a century? Nothing, assuredly, but the virtue of its instruments and the visible blessing of heaven upon their labours. We can scarcely conceive of a sublimer fact than such a pure, spiritual despotism as this, commanding, by the self-denial, virtue, and energy of its administrators, the voluntary adhesion and support of an ever-increasing multitude of persons diffused throughout the three kingdoms, and extorting, ultimately, the homage and admiration of almost the whole nation.

So lofty a dominion was that of Wesley, and so supported!

Before John Wesley's death, however, his Societies had come to include a considerable proportion of intelligent and respectable adherents, well qualified to advise with Mr. Wesley's "assistants" in church affairs. Hence, although the Rules of the Societies remained unaltered, usage began to give the officers of the society a consideration which at first they could not claim. It became usual, especially in certain societies, for the ministers to consult the meeting of stewards and leaders as to important matters. Further than this the growth of popular influence does not seem to have advanced; and, as to this point, though usage might sanction and prudence prescribe the concession of so much to the society-officers, yet no law required it.

Within a few years after the death of the Founder of Methodism, however, important rights and functions began to be legally conceded and guaranteed to the lay-officers of Methodism. The Regulations of 1794, 1795, and 1797, completed the outline of our constitution. But many details remained to be filled in according as circumstances might suggest, and time fit. During the present century much has been done, and our organization is now approaching to completeness.

Since the death of Mr. Wesley, every change in Methodism, affecting the position and functions of the laity, has been a concession to popular influence. The committee system, especially, has introduced a new element into Methodism, by means of which the advantages, with-

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out the jars or evils, of a "lower house" are secured. These afford a fair, virtual representation of the lay-intelligence and influence of Wesleyan Methodism, which is thus brought into advantageous and happy combination with the ministerial executive. And the Conference is, by this plan, relieved, as to mixed and financial matters, of all functions, except those of a Court of Review. Yet all this is done without infringing in any way upon the original principles of Wesleyan Methodism, or marring any of its characteristic features.

The introduction of laymen, also, into the District-Meetings, to take the principal share in the discussion and determination of all matters not purely spiritual and ministerial, is another most important concession of modern Methodism.

In addition to which must be specially mentioned the legislation of 1835, by which further checks were placed around the authority of the ministerial executive, and a constitutional way of access to the Conference, in reference to any change deemed desirable in the laws of the Connexion, opened and secured, as it had not previously been, to the circuits of Methodism.

At present the laity hold a most influential position in Wesleyan Methodism.

Any circuit has the right of suspending, for a year, the operation of any new regulation adopted by the Conference. It is plain that this must compel the revision and alteration at the ensuing Conference of any law rejected by a majority of circuits. The circuits have thus collectively a *veto* upon Conference legislation. At the same time it is open to them to suggest whatever alterations they judge necessary in the laws of the body.

The circuit officers in the District-Meetings have the right of memorializing Conference as to any business regulations.

All the society and circuit officers are, according to the practice of the early church, nominated by the ministers, but elected by the members of the meeting into which they are to be introduced.

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The management of society affairs, as to all general business and bye-regulations, is vested in the Leaders'-Meeting; and of the temporal affairs and general business of the circuit, in the Quarterly-Meeting of the lay-officers of the circuit. The ministers preside over these Meetings, but the vote of the majority decides.

In the administration of ecclesiastical discipline the minister is bound to act upon the verdict of the Leaders'-Meeting; and although the power of censure, suspension, or excision finally rests with him, it is surrounded by such checks and guards, that he is in little danger of acting harshly or rashly in any instance. *The danger now is undoubtedly in the other direction, lest he should find himself too feeble and dependent to exercise necessary discipline in the church.* It is, no doubt, *possible* that he may, in some instances, fall into the opposite fault of haste or tyranny. But this is much less likely than that an irresponsible majority of lay-officers should do so. And if the minister does wrong, he is not only personally and alone responsible to public opinion, and dependent upon that opinion, to a considerable extent, for his comfort and respectability, but he is directly responsible to the superior Connexional courts, the impartiality and resolute justice of which have been repeatedly evinced, and were demonstrated at the very last Conference.

It is not, however, our purpose here either to describe or to vindicate the details of our Connexional system. Our space will not allow this; and, besides, it has been done elsewhere.*

A general outline we thought it needful to give, in order to show how, in a Connexional system, the popular element may have fair play; and the principle—the only principle bearing upon this point taught in scripture—of the mutual support and the concurrence of the ministry and the laity, be carried into every department.

Wesleyan Methodism, like the British Constitution, is

* See the "Principles of Methodism," part i. chaps. ii. iv.; also Dr. Beecham's excellent Essay, and the Rev. George Turner's masterly work.

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a system of checks and compromises. Though, in many particulars, it very closely resembles Presbyterianism, yet, strictly speaking, it is neither Episcopal, Presbyterian, nor Congregational, but blends the characteristics of all three models. More popular than the two first, it is less democratic than the third. Yet, though less democratic, it is more pervasively and practically popular than Congregationalism. At the same time its superintendents, its chairmen of districts, and its presidents, give to it some of the spirit and characteristics of primitive Episcopacy.

The Episcopacy of the Anglican establishment, like that of Popery, ignores the people in the conduct of church affairs; Independency ignores the ministers, as such. In the first, the clergy are the church; in the second, they cease to be even a class. In neither is there any constitutional check to the abuse of power. In Wesleyan Methodism, the scriptural prerogatives of the ministry, and the legitimate influence of the people, are made beautifully to limit and direct each other.

That all in Wesleyan Methodism is perfect, we are far from supposing. *On the contrary, we are convinced that some matters of importance require to be re-adjusted, and some doubtful points defined. Some things now only intimated need to be made explicit. And the system of lay co-operation must, as time advances, become more completely articulated, and be more fully carried out.*

But there are two points which we are equally convinced can *never* be altered. The constitution of the Conference is fixed by law; and the system is so adjusted in all departments to this leading fact, that it could not be altered, even if the law would permit, without bringing confusion and discord and feebleness into the whole working of the system. And the ministerial prerogative in the government of the societies has been reduced to the *minimum* compatible with fidelity to Christ and His law. The supremacy of the Conference is, of course, a primary postulate in a *Connexional* system like ours.

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CHAPTER VIII.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.

We propose in this chapter to exhibit, in a simple but comprehensive summary, the results of the comparison which we have prosecuted in our former chapters.

There are several distinct conditions which should be fulfilled by every system of church polity. Though distinct, they are not incompatible. On the contrary, under a right arrangement, the fulfilment of each of these conditions will contribute to the fulfilment of the rest; and the utmost perfection of the system in reference to *each*, will only be attained by giving the fullest satisfaction to them *all*.

A perfect church-system will at the same time accord with scripture, be directly and pre-eminently adapted to disseminate gospel-truth through the world, be amply supplied and fitted with provisions, means, and capabilities for the spiritual edification of its own members, and be adapted to call forth and elevate all the faculties and endowments, intellectual and spiritual, of all its members. And in proportion as all these conditions are harmoniously fulfilled and satisfied by means of any church system, does that system approach perfection. Let these four tests, then, be applied to Independency and Wesleyan Connexionalism respectively, as their peculiar characteristics have been unfolded in the preceding articles.

1. *Accordance with scripture.* The arguments by which Independents endeavour to deduce their principles from scripture, are founded only upon two or three passages, and are merely inferential. Even as such, too, it has been shown that they are utterly worthless; and that the passages themselves, upon which it is attempted to found them, yield, in reality, evidence on the other side. The very witnesses brought into court in favour of Independency, upon cross-examination, are found fatal to its pretensions. While the scripture-evidence against the

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main principles of Independency, and in favour of the contrasted principles of Wesleyan Connexionalism, is explicit and abundant,—not to mention the multitude of passages which incidentally, and by implication, support them.

2. *Adaptation for efficient external action, in the dissemination of the gospel at home and abroad.*

The principles of Independency are such as to render it almost impotent in this respect. At least, it cannot become missionary, without violating and reversing its fundamental and distinctive principles. Its churches may spread gradually, step by step, church after church, each new church being the surplus from its neighbour church or churches; but it can send forth no missionaries, near or far, to gather sinners from the waste, and form them into infant churches. All that is done in this way, in connexion with Independency, by Congregational Unions, and Home and Missionary Societies,—however much we may rejoice that it is done,—is still only done by the sacrifice of all that is distinctive in the principles of Independency.

The spirit engendered and nourished by Independency, also, is essentially opposed to the missionary spirit. This is the emphatic testimony of some of the most eminent among Independents themselves. Sectarian narrowness, and low-thoughted selfishness,—not catholic and expansive charity,—are the natural fruits of the system of Independency.*

* To the testimonies of Independents on this head already given we here add that of Professor Davidson, of the Lancashire Independent college. "The churches of Congregational Independents," existing "in modern towns," he tells us, "in their independent individuality, are PATCHES AND SHREDS, OFTEN INCAPABLE OF A RIGHT SELF-GOVERNMENT." "Their views," he further says, "have become narrowed. Every man, thinking and moving in the midst of his little society, becomes contracted in his ideas of men and things. *It is very difficult for him to avoid being sectarian, selfish, unsocial in spirit; because his sphere is so narrow. Comprehensive and liberal views of Christianity are not readily nurtured in the small canton which the preacher looks upon as peculiarly his own.*"—"Congregationalist Lecture," 1848. P. 123.

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Whereas Wesleyan Connexionalism, our enemies themselves being judges, is pre-eminently missionary in its genius, its principles, and all its arrangements.

3. *Provisions for internal efficiency in the spiritual edification of the churches.*

A system which so entirely holds its adherents aloof from all foreign action as Congregational Independency, should, at least, be well arranged and provided for internal efficiency. But even in this respect, Independency will not bear scrutiny. Much good has been done in connexion with it; but the system itself cannot justly be called good.

There are three requisites for the edification of a church, —*doctrine*, *discipline*, and *practice*.

(1.) As to DOCTRINAL *purity*, Independency makes no provision for its preservation. Its principles do not admit of the ministers and churches exercising mutual oversight. A corrupt minister or a lax majority may utterly ruin any church.

And as to *efficiency of* DOCTRINAL *inculcation*. Many have been, and are, the eminently holy and the successful ministers among Independents. Still, it cannot be doubted that, in a majority of instances, the ministry of Independent pastors is tame, cold, monotonous, and unsuccessful. And from a system which fetters and fixes its ministers in isolated uniformity, what else can be expected?

(2.) Again, as to DISCIPLINE. On this point, Independency is eminently defective. The church is, in almost every instance, either under the control of that most headstrong and unreflective of all masters, an irresponsible majority, or of a clique which, though the minority in numbers, is the majority in property and influence, and which itself governs irresponsibly under the name of the majority. How few are the Independent churches which are not thus governed, either by a low majority of equals, or, practically, by a few members more wealthy and influential than the rest, to whom ministers and people alike *must* bow, and between whom and the minister

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there is ordinarily a tacit compact! But it is plain that in either of these cases,—and the first is the *normal* case of Independency,—it is impossible for a vigilant, dignified, and impartial discipline to be maintained. Some few Independent churches, whose ministers are men of commanding character and influence, are in a different condition. But in these cases, the principles of Independency are put in abeyance; and the minister exercises *more than* the full authority of a primitive pastor.

(3.) And, as to PRACTICE. The characteristic temptations and tendencies of Independency are, confessedly, very unfavourable to the exercise of the peculiarly Christian virtues. And the isolation of the churches withdraws them from the opportunities of sympathy and the calls of brotherhood and charity.

Contrast with this condition of things that of the Wesleyan church, the vigilance and success with which purity of doctrine is guarded, the variety and the general interest and efficiency of Wesleyan preaching, the impartiality and the comparative vigour of our discipline, and the zeal and warmth of affection which distinguish our people; and it must be admitted that, although many are our defects, yet, compared with Independency, our condition is matter for thankfulness.

4. The remaining test of true and right efficiency in a church-system, is its *adaptation to call forth and elevate all the faculties and endowments, spiritual and intellectual, of its subjects.* We account this to be a point of great importance in any Christian church. The Head of the church intended, by means of his gospel, to elevate and energize *the whole man*, and, by means of the church, to give impulse and nobility to the whole world. Every Christian ought to be an abler man, a better and more energetic citizen, more elevated and refined in thought and feeling,—to be in every way, and at all times, a man of purer, higher, and more powerful spirit,—because of his Christianity. And Christianity, as such, is directly and beautifully adapted to produce these results. But its pure and free spirit may be clogged and fettered by being

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forced into a feeble, defective, or diseased body. The church-system may be such as to impede and derange the natural operations of Christianity. While the one is naturally cheerful, boon, and free, the other may be cold and cramping; while the Christian spirit should, and would, animate the whole body, a false and unnatural theory may reduce the limbs to paralytic helplessness, or sink the system in sluggish feebleness.

Such comparisons would, perhaps, be too strong, if intended to indicate the actual results of Independency. But they illustrate a principle. We have partly shown upon what grounds, and in what respects, we believe that Independency is not in accord with the spirit of Christianity; and that the direct tendency of its distinctive peculiarities is to dam up the flow and diffusion of Christian charities, to narrow the range of intelligence and sympathy, and to repress the energies of the renewed spirit. Especially it has been shown, by undeniable evidence, and by plain and sure reasoning, that Independency does not, and cannot, afford scope or stimulus for the varied talents and attainments of the members of its churches. Spiritual gifts have been as freely bestowed by the Father of Lights on the members of Independent churches as on those of the Wesleyan church; but they are lost for want of opportunity to use and train them. The plants of grace begin to bud, and strive to blossom; but so cold is the soil, and so chill and unmoved the atmosphere in which they exist, that the fair blossom is seldom seen to unfold, and the fruit is still more seldom found. There is, in fact, no inducement or use for any exercise of spiritual insight, or gospel knowledge, on the part of the church members. It is not among Independents as in the primitive church, where the whole church was edified by "that which every joint supplied." Whilst the pastor has no power as a "ruler" in the church, he has, ordinarily, an absolute monopoly of all those functions by which the church is to be directly taught and edified. And his monopoly in the latter case is not less unscriptural than his impotence in the former.

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All that is exercised by the members of Independent churches is that for which few among them can be qualified,—the function of ruling; and this belongs to *all:* whilst that for which, in due place and proportion, many might be, or might become, well qualified,—the office of teaching,—is withheld from all. What wonder, then, that those who, without faculty or true vocation, exercise the functions of legislator and judge,—whilst they have scarcely any opportunity or motive to use spiritual knowledge for the edification of their fellows,—should sometimes be more distinguished for cavilling and wilfulness than for Christian activity and scriptural knowledge? What wonder that torpor and formalism should, in such cases, benumb the spiritual sensibilities and faculties?

Undoubtedly the zeal of Wesleyans often outstrips their knowledge, and this is much to be lamented; but even this is not so bad as for Christians to be destitute of both zeal and knowledge. On the other hand, again, there can be no doubt that there are some Independent churches in which some of the members are deservedly distinguished for the combination of zeal and knowledge; but in these particular cases the bad tendencies of the system have been counteracted by the energy and piety of the pastors, whose authority here is supreme. And even in these cases, notwithstanding the commanding talents, and distinguished piety, and systematic energy of the eminent men who, *spite of* their independent *theory*, *govern* their churches, the want of adequate scope and motive for calling into full play the energies of the church members is continually felt to be a great evil; whilst in the great majority of Independent church republics the condition of affairs is such as we have indicated in the last paragraph.

In the churches of Wesleyan Methodism we see a very different spectacle. There the ministers are surrounded, and at the same time both checked and assisted, by a multitude of lay-officers of various kinds. These not only take, as we saw in our last chapter, their full share of the government of the churches, but also exercise, in many

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cases, most important spiritual functions. We have not only our trustees, but also our local, or lay, preachers, and our leaders. We find a place for everybody, though we are not always able to keep everybody in his place. There is no gift or energy, no variety of talent, for which Wesleyan Methodism does not afford scope and opportunity. Not only spiritual gifts, but business talents of every kind, find employment among Wesleyans, All endowments are quickened and made fruitful. Though a supreme responsibility rests with the pastor in reference to the supply of all church needs, and the performance of all church functions; yet nothing is exclusively his, but the sentence of excision from the church, and the administration of the sacraments—the necessary and peculiar functions of the *pastoral* office. Preaching the word, watching over their fellow-Christians in the Lord, visiting the sick, are functions which all Christians are called, in some form and degree, to perform; and for their regular and official performance by duly qualified laymen, Wesleyan Methodism makes systematic provision. At the same time these officers, besides others specially appointed to fulfil the office of steward and of trustee, have the management of the ordinary business of the churches. And here how free is their speech, how independent are their opinions, and, generally speaking, how intelligent and Christian are their views! No narrow church bed confines them,—they regulate not one church apart, but a circuit, a community of churches,—and they are identified with a Connexion which extends through the world.

And all these offices—besides a large number of minor ones, connected with the numerous branch-institutions of Wesleyan Methodism—are accessible to all, and will be surely reached by those who, by zeal, liberality, and appropriate talent, have proved their fitness.

There are dangers, undoubtedly, in such a system. It offers temptations to ambition. It stimulates activity more than it favours reflectiveness. There is danger lest the man of quiet worth should be overlooked, and the pushing talker be promoted. The leaven of democracy is apt to

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work too powerfully, and too much scope is afforded for the arts and violence of demagoguism.

But these are faults which, to some extent, are inevitable in a system through which intelligence and sympathy circulate so freely, and where office and influence are accessible to all. And it is far better that these should be endured, than that either the people should be in bondage, or spiritual functions a monopoly, or a connexion be broken up into "interests." In a good degree, however, they admit of being neutralized or removed by a more careful education of the people, a more jealous scrutiny of candidates for office, and a more vigilant piety and deeper spirituality among the ministers. Whereas the faults of Independency are unmitigable—except at the expense of consistency, being the normal and legitimate result and expression of its first and fundamental principles—and are vital, because they affect the whole system of government and teaching in the churches. The different parts of Wesleyan Methodism admit of being so fitted, and balanced, and cushioned, that the friction and jarring can ultimately be reduced to an almost inappreciably small quantity; but Independency, merging, so far as government is concerned, the minister among the people, annihilating all individual responsibility, and consecrating, as a divine right, the absolute and universal authority of the majority, embodies a mere *brutum fulmen*, deifies blind force, and, whatever be its wrong, can admit of no compromise or check.

We cannot better close this article than by the following extract from Mr. Miall's work, so often quoted by us, in which, whilst drawing his conception of an efficient church, he, unawares, depicts and eloquently eulogizes our Wesleyan Connexionalism.

Speaking of church "*association*," as it ought to work, he says:—

> Besides the additional strength which it contributes to a common spirit, character, and purpose, the fervour which it nourishes, and the general elevation of all the moral qualities affecting the determination of the will which it secures, upon which we have already

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remarked, it is attended by other advantages of a high order. *It concentrates wisdom, and it distributes power. It collects from as wide a surface of knowledge, talent, and experience, as possible, for counsel; and by systematic apportionment of labour, it economises action, and makes it tell to the fullest extent. Union in all that pertains to the direction of enterprise is strength, subdivision in all that pertains to the prosecution of it is tributary to success. A common stock into which each may cast his mite is likely to result in the best plans; a separate sphere in which each may employ his powers is equally conducive to perfect efficiency in exertion. Mutual trust is necessary to the one, cheerful subordination to the other. In the first case individuality merges into what is common to all; in the last, the common purpose of all distributes itself among separate individualities.* The arrangement, indeed, is beautifully illustrative of what we often meet with elsewhere,—the law of mutual action and reaction. *The church as a whole, and every member of it as a component part of it, receives to give, and in giving receives.* It is blessed that it may be a blessing; and when most abundant in dispensing good, it realizes most profit and joy in the fruit of it. *Each has a portion of its life and efficiency in all, and all in each.* Christ, the image of the invisible God, is the Head; and from Him "the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted *by that which every joint supplieth*, maketh increase of the body, to the edifying of itself in love." *

Assuredly, a Connexion only can realize this beautiful description.

Our task is now at an end. We undertook it reluctantly. The misrepresentation and hostility of the Independent press have forced us to it. We have spoken plainly, and argued strongly; but we trust that we have caught none of their bitterness of spirit. We have numbered, and number still, Independents and Independent ministers among our personal friends; with some we have had literary association; but their system, we are solemnly convinced, is the most unscriptural form of church government in Protestant Christendom. The maimed episcopacy of the church of England altogether ignores the people, and, even among its communicants, makes no provision for separating the believers from sinners, sacred from profane. It cannot, therefore, with strict propriety, be called a church system at all. But an evangelical episcopacy, even though diocesan, efficiently organized, freed

* MIALL, 8vo. ed. pp. 100, 101.

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from secular control, and gathering its people into churches, would be an incomparably superior system to that of Independency.

Meanwhile, we have a right to require that Independent partisans should lower their voice, and moderate their pretensions. They are now upon the defensive; let their dogmatism cease. Let them condescend, like other people, to hear reason and to offer argument. Let them listen to the reproofs and counsels of such justly eminent and honoured ministers of their own denomination as Drs. Payne and Davidson, and Messrs. James and Binney, repress their sectarian animosity, and look abroad over the sides of the Independent cradle in which they have so long see-sawed and nursed themselves; and they may, perhaps, discover that they were mistaken in supposing that "they were the men, and wisdom will die with them."

At least, let them reply to our arguments, or leave us in peace. We engage not to attack them, if they will not assail us. We have ever been peaceable, and would fain continue so. But fellowship with such spirits it is vain to hope for. Again, and again, have we sought amity, and seemed to find it for a time. But our confidence has always been imposed upon, and our hopes have ever been deceived. We dare not hastily trust to them again. With a few noble exceptions, whom we the more love and honour for their rareness, it is the principle of Independents, when possible and as far as possible, to embroil, injure, and scatter Wesleyans. No doubt some do this conscientiously, and from zeal for God; but such zeal is neither according to knowledge nor charity. Why cannot they peaceably serve God according to their own conscience, and suffer us to do the same, without compelling us to exhibit before Papists and worldlings the sad spectacle of nonconformist Protestant communities at variance with each other? For Christ's sake, and the sake of souls, let us be allowed in peace to spread that Gospel which is the only cure or palliative for the woes of a fallen world.

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APPENDIX.

THE following argument originally appeared as a leading article in the columns of the "Watchman and Wesleyan Advertiser." It is appended here as a fit supplement to the foregoing series.

INDEPENDENCY AND CONNEXIONALISM MUTUALLY INCOMPATIBLE AND EXCLUSIVE.

THE theory of Independency supposes that no church act is regular and legitimate, which has not the direct concurrence of all the members of the church. It is conceived to be a matter not of prudence or expediency, but of *right*, that each member should thus participate directly and equally in all the regulative or disciplinary decisions of the church to which he belongs.

In like manner, of late, Wesleyan "Reformers" have been taught to claim a direct participation in certain administrative and disciplinary acts and functions connected with the Wesleyan societies. This claim is not advanced on the ground of obvious advantage in the promotion of religion, and the better working of the system of Wesleyanism, but of positive and indefeasible right—the right, as it is alleged, of all the members of a Christian church directly to assist and concur in all church acts. The former ground would be too low, and far too disputable and precarious, for our positive and *doctrinaire* Reformers. If the question were argued simply as one of Christian prudence and expediency, it would be impossible to get up a fierce, fanatic agitation in reference to it. But by representing what they demand as their absolute, scriptural right, wrongfully and irreligiously withheld from the people of Christ by their ministers, they secure a theme admitting of unlimited declamation, and suggestive of endless and most diversified vituperation.

It is our purpose, then, in the present article, to show that, in respect to a very large proportion of church-acts and arrangements, it is simply *impossible*, in our Connexion, that all the members should directly concur in them. If no church-act can be valid without such direct concurrence, then the greater number of our church-acts *must* be invalid, and our Wesleyanism is hopelessly and incurably in fault. So that either our Connexionalism must be given up, or this theory of popular rights must be relinquished, and any concessions which are asked must be pleaded for on the ground of Christian prudence and expediency, not of Divine right.

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Let it be observed, that the theory is not, nor ever has been, that the people have a Divine, necessary, indefeasible right to join in this or the other particular church-act or decision in order to its validity, —but that they must be direct parties to *every* act or arrangement affecting the church at large, or that such act or arrangement cannot be regularly valid. The "Reformers" must not be content to forego five of the rights claimed by Independents, because they see that to demand them would be in our Connexion utterly absurd and impracticable, and then concentrate all their passion and energy in demanding the sixth, as their absolute "Christian right," because they would very much like it, and think that possibly, by agitation, they might get it. They must reason consistently, and either adopt the Independent theory throughout, or give it up altogether.

We write now for those who have embraced Connexionalism, and who, however they may have been misled to suspect their ministers, or demand particular changes in the Wesleyan system, still prefer that system to all others for its social warmth; for its various capabilities and its mighty power; for its aggressive and missionary means and tendencies; for the at once intenser and more diffusive zeal and charity which it promotes. To such Wesleyans as these we wish to prove, if they are not clearly convinced of it already, that Independency and Connexionalism are mutually incompatible and exclusive. No compromise can be made between them. And he that is enamoured of the one, must entirely forego the fellowship of the other.

Simple truism as this may seem to those who have thought closely or clearly on these matters, yet by some, we fear, it is not at all apprehended. Otherwise we should never hear those who profess to love the essentials and the corporate unity of Methodism, asking for privileges or rights, as they conceive them to be, which might consistently enough be required by Independents, but which could not be granted to Wesleyans without contradicting and stultifying our Connexional conditions and principles, and introducing into the working of our system such confusion and conflict as must eventually end in disruption. That some Independent partisans should urge Wesleyans to make such demands, is, alas! no matter of surprise; especially if they foresee what the consequence would be, should these demands be granted. But it is strange that there can be found honest-meaning Wesleyans blind enough to make them. Beware, simple Wesleyans, lest you be made the tools of those who are jealous of the efficiency of your Connexional system, and would rejoice in its rending and ruin; or who, in the spirit of a blind and surd sectarianism, oppose and decry principles and provisions of which, in their mutual relations and working, they know absolutely nothing, except that they differ altogether from those which they have themselves been led to embrace.

According to the theory of Independency, every member of each particular church has a voice, and an equal vote, in all matters connected with the government, discipline, and religious services of the church. In each church-republic, universal suffrage is the law: and

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this is supposed to be according to Divine appointment and requirement; so that it is held to be not only the privilege, but the duty, of every member to take his direct share in the management of all matters connected with the church. It is conceived to be as unlawful to delegate to a representative one's interest and influence in relation to the government of the church, as it would be impossible to hold by a representative one's interest in Christ. Personal and direct action in the one case is, we are told, as bounden upon every Christian, as personal and direct faith and appropriation in the other.

Holding such views, the Independent consistently urges the Wesleyan to demand and exercise a personal and immediate share in all matters connected with church government and discipline. He constantly reiterates the cry, that this is not less his duty than his privilege as a Christian. He represents this as a part of the inheritance purchased for him by Christ, a part of the dignity accruing to him with his adoption by the Father.

And some Wesleyans have listened to these appeals, and been persuaded by them. As most of us, by nature, love influence and power,—as it is pleasant for the young and inexperienced convert to be told that his voice, in the government of the church, is and ought to be equal to that of the wise and hoary-headed saint,—it is no wonder that this republican theory finds some admirers. It would be very wonderful if it did not; and, on the whole, it is really matter of surprise that more are not led away by it than are. But we fancy nearly all who have been captivated by it forget, or have never observed, that it is a theory essentially and altogether inconsistent with Connexionalism, and one to which it is utterly impossible that the authorities of the Connexion should ever accede or defer.

An Independent church is complete in itself. Connected with one pastorate is one place of worship, one congregation, and one "church." Here, then, the whole church *can* be called together to consider each matter belonging to the church interests, and their decision may rightly and finally determine the case. Each member of the church is simply and directly related to the whole, and can immediately be brought into connexion and correspondence with all the other members. And when all are gathered together, not only every component member, but every constitutional interest, and every essential relation of the whole church, is there, not simply represented, but embodied. There are no external relations or obligations which need to be considered or represented. Each church is entire, independent, alone. The jurisdiction of each is complete and supreme as to all matters, whether of external action and intercourse, or of internal relations and regulations. Each Independent church is a *monad*, self-contained and complete. When most closely associated with each other, they are still but an aggregation of crystals, each distinctly entire, shaped and consolidated by its own internal forces, existing independently by the affinities and cohesions of its own constituent atoms.

In an Independent church, then, each member *can* be present and

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vote on all questions connected with the discipline and government of the church; and, each church-meeting representing, in fact, the whole church in all its parts, interests, and relations, the decisions of such meetings may rightly determine every thing. But how different is the case in the Wesleyan Connexion! Here no society can regulate its own affairs independently, because it is only a part, and may be a very small and dependent part, of the circuit to which it belongs. The ministers have the charge, not of each society individually and independently, but of all conjunctively; and the interests of the part must, of course, with them, be subordinate to those of the whole. In accordance with this, they are supported and sustained, not by each part severally, nor by one or two exclusively, but by all conjointly. And so, in the general regulation of the circuit, they must be informed and assisted by a committee or council representing all the various societies and interests of the circuit; and whose determinations must be binding upon each particular society, and superior to the regulations and decisions of the meetings representative of the different societies individually considered. It is plain, too, that this general meeting for the circuit could not possibly be attended by all the members constituting the various societies included in the circuit, even supposing that this would not be, on other accounts, a thing very undesirable and inconvenient. A representative arrangement for the various societies which make up the number of church-members united under one pastorate in the circuit, is, therefore, a matter of necessity; and it is equally so, that the affairs of each society shall only be so far regulated by that society, as they have not already been determined by the general regulations of the circuit. It is plain that, in such a condition as this, there is no room for the application of the theory of Independency. The various societies of the circuit are all mutually dependent, and all their interests are interwoven. The pastorate stands related not to each society independently, but to all conjointly. The church-members committed to the charge of the pastorate are not connected with one place of worship, and accustomed to assemble in one place of meeting, but consist of bands attached to many different chapels, and separated by wide distances.

But this is by no means all the distinction between Independency and Wesleyan Connexionalism. As each society is but a subordinate and dependent part of the circuit, so each circuit is only a subordinate and dependent part of the Connexion at large. As each society is under the care of pastors maintained not by itself alone, but by the circuit at large, and for the benefit of the whole circuit, so each circuit is placed primarily and supremely under the care of the united and common pastorate of the whole Connexion, receiving from their number whomsoever they may, in common council, agree to appoint, from year to year, and, at most, for a very limited period of years, to that particular temporary charge. Each circuit, therefore, stands related, permanently and ultimately, not to any particular pastor or pastors, but only to the common and circulating pastorate of our whole Connexion. And, further, the ministers are no

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more maintained, even during the brief period of their residence in any circuit, exclusively by that circuit, than by any particular society in it. Some very important items of that maintenance are derived from common funds supported by the whole Connexion. And, in addition to this, very many circuits are dependent upon the special charity of the Connexion at large for aid towards the maintenance of their ministers. Indeed, there are comparatively few of the now independent circuits (so called) which were not formerly, in this sense, directly and specially dependent.* And, of course, viewing the career of each minister from first to last, it will be seen that his relation and obligation to any particular circuit can be but temporary and, in a sense, accidental; his essential and permanent obligation can only be to the Connexion at large. Finally, as the decisions relative to each society in a circuit must be subordinated to the general regulations and the general welfare of that circuit, so the determinations of the general circuit-meeting itself must be limited and conditioned by the regulations and decisions of the supreme Connexional authority. These must be absolute and final in regard to each constituent circuit, and each particular society.

This, of course, is the strongest and completest contrast to Independency possible. It results from this state of affairs, that no circuit has a right to decide upon matters independently, much less any society. Even the most important circuit is but comparatively a minute member of that corporate whole, from which its Christian life and privileges are derived. The whole is of more importance than any part. The well-being of the whole must be regarded before the will of any part, however considerable. The regulations adopted for the good of the whole must be held inviolate, at whatever sacrifice of predilection, prejudice, or temporary convenience to any of the parts. No circuit-meeting can be permitted to contravene, or interfere with, these. They are the postulates of its existence, and must be sacredly respected in every transaction or subordinate regulation. And the meetings for the societies in the different localities must be doubly limited by the common laws of the whole Connexion, and by the special regulations of the circuits to which they belong.

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* Very many, too, have been relieved from crushing difficulty or impending ruin, by the help of the Chapel Relief-Fund. We have been lately brought into special acquaintance with the case of a small circuit connected with a cathedral city in the midland district. The principal chapel in this circuit has long been embarrassed. It has received from the Chapel-Fund *two final* grants of considerable amount, and has been promised a *third* on certain reasonable conditions. It also receives aids from the Contingent or Home Mission-Fund, and is hoping to have that aid increased. Yet several of the chief officers and most responsible parties in that circuit madly talk of the right of their circuit and of themselves to independency and self-control; nay, even withhold their contributions from the fund to which they fly for help. The ignorance of these persons is pitiable, their ingratitude we know not how to characterize.

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Most of the affairs to be determined by an Independent church-meeting are thus, of necessity, taken out of the hands of the particular societies. The business to be transacted in connexion with them, except in rare cases, is simply of a routine or economical character, in reference to which it would be the merest folly and superfluity to call together more than the officers particularly charged with its responsibility.

There is one other grand distinction between Independency and Wesleyan Connexionalism, which we must not omit to name. It is this. In Independency, the church exists before the minister; the minister holds his pastoral office directly from the people. The latter have therefore a right, (legally speaking,) if they see fit, to join themselves to the minister in every regulative decision and disciplinary act. The people confer the office on the pastor of their own election, and, so far as they do not conceive the matter to have been taken out of their hands by the plain decision of scripture, they can make their own conditions with the pastor, as to his discharge of the functions of his office. But in the Wesleyan Connexion it is quite otherwise. There the connexion of circuits depends, and has ever depended, on the prior union of ministers; and the existence and maintenance of each circuit, on the prior existence of the Connexion. "The Conference, from the first, has been to Methodism the central and vitalizing body, possessing a collective pastoral authority and oversight over the whole." "Upon them, as the united pastorate, the whole Connexion has been dependent, as its origin and centre; by them, as such, energy, direction, and extension have been, and are still, given to the whole corporate entity of Methodism."* As, then, the members of an Independent church, in electing a pastor to serve them, have a right,—scripture teaching being respected,—to make what conditions they deem fit, with the minister who derives from them his particular authority as pastor; so, it must be admitted, that the Wesleyan pastorate, in receiving into connexion with themselves any circuit, have a right—plain scripture-teaching again being respected—to impose whatever conditions they shall deem necessary or conducive to the general peace, prosperity, and efficiency of the Connexion placed under their care. And that these conditions, imposed by them for the general well-working of a Connexion, should be identical with the rights reserved to themselves by the members of an isolated Independent church, is surely, when the manifold and extreme diversity of circumstances is taken into account, a thing the least of all to be expected.

Yet are there some people to be found foolish enough to apply to Connexionalism the rule of Independency, and to claim for Wesleyans, in addition to the numerous peculiar rights and privileges which they now possess, the alien and incompatible functions exercised by the members of Independent churches.

The question is easily narrowed to a point. On what ground are

* "Principles of Methodism," p. 95.

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certain rights claimed for Wesleyans? Is it of scripture authority, or of expediency? If the latter, let the tone of demand be lowered, and the question fairly and modestly argued. Let what has been urged on the side of existing arrangements be carefully read, and candidly weighed And let it be *answered*, if possible. Hitherto we have seen nothing of this kind attempted. Calumnies and dogmatic assertions are plentiful enough, but arguments are scarce. But if these "rights" are claimed on the ground of scripture, our reply is, "The theory which makes these your due, is the theory, not of Connexionalism, but of Independency. On no other hypothesis can scripture be made even to seem to favour your views. But that theory we do not accept; nor can you do so, as Connexionalists. If the Independents are right, exclusively and divinely, we are all wrong from first to last. The principles of the two systems are opposed at every turn and point. It is necessary that you should choose the one or the other. You cannot amalgamate or harmonize both. And if you are not prepared to abandon Connexionalism, with all its warmth and breadth, its energy and diffusion, its wide and manifold activity of love, then assault its arrangements no more on Independent principles."

THE END.

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